



SELECTIONS FROM BYRON,  
WORDSWORTH, SHELLEY, KEATS AND  
BROWNING;

GEORGE GORDON BYRON BYRON BARON, 1788-182, PERCY  
BYSSHE SHELLEY 1792-1822, WILLIAM WORDSWORTH 1770-1850,  
JOHN KEATS 1795-1821, ROBERT BROWNING 1812-1889, HENRY  
MUNER RIDEOUT 1877-1927, JOIN



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George Gordon Byron Byron Baron,  
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# THE HISTORY OF THE

REIGN OF

CHARLES THE FIRST

BY

JOHN BURNET

OF

THE UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

IN TWO VOLUMES

LONDON

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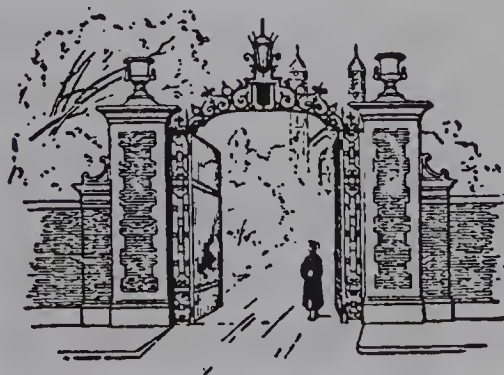
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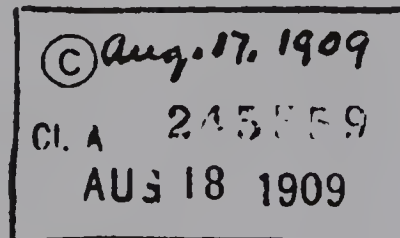


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SELECTIONS.

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## PREFACE BY THE GENERAL EDITOR

THIS series of books aims, first, to give the English texts required for entrance to college in a form which shall make them clear, interesting, and helpful to those who are beginning the study of literature; and, second, to supply the knowledge which the student needs to pass the entrance examination. For these two reasons it is called *The Gateway Series*.

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HENRY VAN DYKE.



# CONTENTS

LORD BYRON	PAGE
Introduction . . . . .	9
Selected Poems . . . . .	23
WILLIAM WORDSWORTH	
Introduction . . . . .	69
Selected Poems . . . . .	85
PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY	
Introduction . . . . .	159
Selected Poems . . . . .	175
JOHN KEATS	
Introduction . . . . .	209
Selected Poems . . . . .	225
ROBERT BROWNING	
Introduction . . . . .	245
Selected Poems . . . . .	261
NOTES . . . . .	309



## LORD BYRON

### • I. LIFE

GEORGE GORDON, afterward sixth Lord Byron, was born in Holles Street, London, January 22, 1788. His mother, Catherine Gordon, had become the second wife of John Byron, a handsome profligate who deserted her and her child, fled from his creditors, and died at Valenciennes in 1791. Till her son was ten years old, Mrs. Byron lived in Scotland, chiefly at Aberdeen, on a meagre income of £150 a year. But in 1798 the fifth Lord Byron died,—the boy's great-uncle, that "wicked lord" who was brother to the Admiral, "Foul-weather Jack." At school roll-call, after the news arrived, the name of George Gordon was read out with "Dominus" before it, and the precocious little lame boy burst into tears, in some mingled and violent emotion.

With his mother and the Scotch nurse who had taught him to read the Bible, the young Lord Byron soon journeyed south in a post-chaise, to live near Newstead Abbey, the family seat, then partly ruined, which Henry VIII granted to "little Sir John Byron of the great beard." Here they remained for a year. Their life together was never happy. "Byron," a schoolmate once said, "your mother is a fool!" And the poor

child replied, tragically, "I know it!" By fits and starts Mrs. Byron was kind to him, but she had a stormy temper, hysterical and ungovernable, and by turns petted and beat him. Once at least she rushed at him with the poker, and Byron defended himself with the chairs. Later, at Southwell, mother and son each secretly warned an apothecary not to sell poison to the other, if it should be asked for. A violent pair, they lived in a tempest. Perhaps what hurt Byron most, his mother once called him a "lame brat." Quietly, but with a terrible light in his eyes, he replied, "I was born so, mother!"

He was born, indeed, with a deformity—a sort of club-foot—which throughout his life he hardly forgot for a moment. The defect appears not to have been greatly noticeable, but he brooded over it always: from the time when, on his nurse's knees, he cut with his baby's whip at a visitor who noticed his foot, crying, "Dinna speak of it!"—from his school days at Harrow, where cruel bullies put his lame foot into a bucket of water; from the days when he jealously watched his cousin, Mary Chaworth, dancing with other youths, to his last hours on his death-bed. His lameness cut him off from many games and exercises, but not all. At Harrow—where he stayed from 1801 to 1805, and where his head-master discovered talents which would "add lustre to his rank"—he not only led all the boys' rebellions, but fought the larger boys who tormented the smaller, and—lameness and all—won six battles out of seven.

Though later of a strikingly beautiful face and figure, he was at this time described by an acquaintance as "a fat, bashful boy, with hair combed straight over his forehead, and looking a perfect gaby." He was conceited as well as shy, and not very popular among girls. We need not be surprised, therefore, that when, in his sixteenth year, he fell in love with his cousin, Mary Chaworth, she did not fall in love with him. She afterward married a commonplace squire named Musters, and married unhappily. For years Byron brooded over this disappointment, but most over an unintentionally cruel rebuke, when he heard Mary Chaworth say to her maid: "Do you think I could marry that lame boy?"

When Byron went up to Cambridge in 1805, you must picture him as a brilliant, vain, sensitive youngster, whom the gyp (the man that took care of his rooms) feared as "a young man of tumultuous passions"; who made several sincere friends, Long, Harness, Matthews, Scrope Davies, and Hobhouse; who found Cambridge dull, and became a harum-scarum undergraduate, sometimes sitting up over champagne and claret till after midnight; who was a good cricketer, rider, boxer, could dive in the Cam and get coins fourteen feet deep, and was an expert shot. His pistols he carried everywhere and fired at all times and places,—alarming people, as he also alarmed them by keeping a tame bear, who, he said, was to "sit for a fellowship." Meantime he published in 1806 a volume of juvenile poems, and in 1807 his *Hours of Idleness*. In 1808, after three irregular years in which he had done everything but study, he



took the honorary (nobleman's) degree of M.A., and left Cambridge for London.

Here he was wilder than ever, and boasted of being so; for he always took a foolish delight in thinking himself very wicked, and in telling everybody about it, with exaggerations. He had an almost insane desire to shock people. Sensitive, moody, he was forever disclosing and falsifying his most intimate nature. His gifts he had not yet disclosed; till a savage, "tomahawk" criticism of the *Hours of Idleness*, in the *Edinburgh Review* for January, 1808, roused him into a rage. Mere rage, but also a stinging wit, made his *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers* something more than a reply to his critics. It was the most notable satirical poem since the age of Pope. It scoffed at men he knew, and men he did not know; at books he had read, and books he had never seen the covers of. Wholesale ridicule by a youngster of twenty-one, often shallow and unjust, it showed power. A few days before the poem appeared, Byron had taken his seat in the House of Lords, haughtily, or at least negligently. He now retired with a few friends to Newstead, for a long and strange carousal, with the popping of corks and pistols, with a wolf and a bear to tease, and with fencing and swimming, and late hours of wild discussion and ghost stories, while they drank wine from the skull of an old monk. These orgies were doubtless bad enough, but not at all so dark as the readers of *Childe Harold* afterward imagined.

The travels which led to that famous poem now



began. From Newstead, Byron went with Hobhouse and a few servants to Falmouth, and sailed thence for Lisbon. He journeyed for two years through Greece, Turkey, the Troad, and the Greek isles. He dined with Ali Pasha, the Albanian bandit, assassin, and despot; he met the Maid of Athens; and with Lieutenant Ekenhead, he swam Leander's Hellespont, from Sestos to Abydos. After many adventurous wanderings, he returned to England in 1811, "without a hope," he said, "and almost without a desire, . . . sick of poesy," but with "some 4000 lines, of one kind and another," written on his travels.

Within a month his mother died. For all their constant battles and patched-up truces, Byron was deeply affected. Sorrow and renown came to him in the same year. Matthews, drowned in the Cam, was the fourth friend he had lost. On the 1st of March, 1812, when the first and second cantos of *Childe Harold* appeared, Byron "woke and found himself famous." In four weeks the book ran through seven editions. The success was electric. The first edition of Burns, and Scott's *Lays*, were the only popular triumphs of poetry to be compared with this. Sir Walter himself soon gave up writing poetry, he said, "because Byron beat me." Byron, indeed, rapidly followed up his first success with others: in 1813, *The Waltz*, *The Giaour*, and *The Bride of Abydos*, which last he dashed off in four nights; next year, *The Corsair*, written in ten days, sold to the extent of 14,000 copies in one day; in the same year appeared *Lara*; and in 1816, *The Siege of*

*Corinth* and *Parisina*. In ten years, £75,000 had passed over the publisher Murray's counter, from Lord Byron's pen alone. Byron and Byronic romance became the fashion, not only in England, but all over the continent.

The two most popular English poets of the day, Scott and Byron (for you must remember that Wordsworth, Shelley, and Keats were long neglected and obscure), met in London in 1815. They became friends, and afterwards exchanged gifts, "like the old heroes of Homer." Scott found the new-risen genius irritable, suspicious, but also gay and generous. Lord Byron—he afterward said regretfully—could not be happy in the common way. "As for poets," he also said, "I have seen all the best of my time and country, and . . . I never thought any of them would come up to an artist's notion of the character, except Byron. His countenance is a thing to dream of." A child once described him as "the gentleman with the beautiful voice." Lady Blessington wrote that "his mouth was splendid, and his scornful expression was real, not affected, but a sweet smile often broke through his melancholy." And Lady Caroline Lamb, at first sight of Byron, exclaimed, "That pale face is my fate!" We need not wonder that Byron fascinated many women, of high and low degree; and that from 1813 to 1816, he was the social lion of the Regency.

His marriage with Miss Anne Isabella Milbanke, in 1815, was very unhappy. Five weeks after the birth of their daughter, Augusta Ada, Lady Byron left her

husband. Their troubles were discussed publicly, Byron's real and grave faults were magnified by slander, and a reaction setting in against him, this hero of the hour was attacked so atrociously as a monster, a Nero, a Satan, that in 1816 he left England, never to come back.

In Switzerland he wrote the third canto of *Childe Harold*, the *Prisoner of Chillon*, and *Prometheus*. He then journeyed to Italy, where he lived for the next seven years. In 1817, at Venice, he finished *Manfred*, and wrote the *Lament of Tasso*, the fourth canto of *Childe Harold*, and *Beppo*; in the next two years, the *Ode on Venice*, *Mazeppa*, and the first four cantos of *Don Juan*; in 1820 and 1821, at Ravenna, the *Prophecy of Dante*, *Marino Faliero*, *Sardanapalus*, *The Two Foscari*, *Cain*, *Heaven and Earth*, and *A Vision of Judgment*. During the rest of his stay, he wrote *Werner*, *The Deformed Transformed*, and *The Island*, and finished *Don Juan*. Meantime he had fallen in with Shelley. The two revolutionary poets lived at Pisa in the closest friendship; and when in 1822 Shelley was drowned, Byron grieved beside that strange funeral pyre on the beach. His own life, throughout this period, was irregular and reckless. Fasting and reveling by turns, he ruined himself by his many excesses.

But out of this sensual existence he rose, to redeem it by a splendid end. From a fantastic, posing voluptuary, he suddenly became a man of action, a practical financier, soldier, and liberator. He had always hated despotism; his name was already linked with that of



Greece; and when the Greek war of independence, after two successful years, seemed ready to fail through dissension and poverty, it was natural that English friends of the Hellenic cause, planning an expedition of aid, should offer Byron the command. On July 15-16, 1823, taking along Shelley's friend, Captain Trelawny, and a few others, Byron set sail from Genoa in the brig "Hercules," with arms and ammunition, horses, medicines, and 50,000 crowns in money. Fondness for display — as his enemies urged — may have impelled Byron at first; but every day disclosed and strengthened his high purpose. From the marshes of Missolonghi, among fevers and turmoils, the poet-soldier disciplined his quarrelling Suliotes, repaired fortifications, directed ships, negotiated for loans, and issued clear and statesmanlike orders. "Your counsels," said the Greek prince, "will be listened to like oracles." Fortune, however, would not suffer Byron to find a soldier's grave, to "look around, and choose his ground, and take his rest"; for a fever seized him in that bog, and on April 19, 1824, he died, calling on the names of Augusta Leigh, his sister, and of Ada, his dead child.

"Byron is dead!" sounded in the streets, said Trelawny, like a bell tolling. Mavrocordatos commanded the battery to fire thirty-seven guns, one for each year of the short life. Lord Byron's body lies with his ancestors in the village church of Hucknall, for Westminster Abbey refused a grave to the author of *Cain*. But his spirit had "led the genius of Britain on a pilgrimage

throughout all Europe"; as for the birthplace of Homer, cities of Greece had contended for his burial-place; and Athens would have laid her defender in the Temple of Theseus.

## II. POEMS

*The Prisoner of Chillon* was written at Ouchy within two days, June 26 and 27, 1816, the first year of Byron's exile and one of the few most important years of his life. Byron, always alive to the horrors of oppression, had been deeply stirred by the meagre account of the sufferings of Bonnivard, a political prisoner in the Castle of Chillon, and by the sight of the room in which he was confined. "The Château de Chillon is situated between Clarens and Villeneuve, which last is at one extremity of the Lake of Geneva. On its left are the entrances of the Rhone, and opposite are the heights of Meillerie, and the range of Alps above Boveret and St. Gingo. Near it, on a hill behind, is a torrent: below it, washing its walls, the lake has been fathomed to the depth of 800 feet, French measure: within it are a range of dungeons, in which the early reformers, and subsequently prisoners of state, were confined. Across one of the vaults is a beam black with age, on which we were informed that the condemned were formerly executed. In the cells are seven pillars, or, rather, eight, one being half merged in the wall; in some of these are rings for the fetters and the fettered: in the pavement the steps of Bonnivard have left their traces. He was confined here several years. . . .

The Château is large, and seen along the lake for a great distance. The walls are white."

You cannot better study the processes of a poet's mind in a work of this kind than by comparing these matter-of-fact details with the poem. In any good encyclopædia or annotated edition of Byron you will find material, which you may well use, for further comparison; and your teachers will no doubt put you in the way of seeing some of the many photographs of Chillon and the Lake of Geneva.

The poem is written in a quieter, more chastened spirit than was common with Byron, and it is of superior form to his earlier short narratives. In fact, not only do *The Prisoner* and *Mazeppa* proceed almost wholly without digression, but their sheer speed of narrative is what Byron never attained in his longer pieces and rarely even in his shorter ones. This means also, of course, that scenery, on which Byron and other romantic poets are prone to insist too much, is here fleeting, incidental, strictly subordinate to the story and the impression it gives of Bonnivard. Yet the work would scarcely be Byron's if, concerned with outdoors at all, it did not contain some memorable picture. And indeed the one landscape in *The Prisoner* not only gains by isolation and contrast, but it is one of those triumphs of art in which much is shown in strokes as few as they are secure. Bonnivard, having ascended to his barred windows to catch sight of the mountains again, says, in lines that have been often quoted and that will be quoted many times in the future —



"I saw them — and they were the same.  
 They were not changed like the flames:  
 I saw their thousand years of strife  
 On high — their white long robes of life,  
 And the blue robe in finest folds;  
 I heard the torrents leap and gush  
 O'er channelled rock and broken cleft;  
 I saw the white-walled distant town  
 And whiter sails go skimming down,  
 And then there was a little isle,  
 Which in my very face I smile,  
 The only one in view:  
 A small green isle, it seemed no more,  
 Scarce broader than my finger's end,  
 But in it there were three tall trees,  
 And o'er it blew the mountain breeze,  
 And by it there were waters flowing,  
 And on it there were young flowers growing  
 Of gentle breath and hue."

As definite, you see, as Elim, with its palm trees and its wells of water, in the Book of Exodus. And these lines, so far from breaking the unity of the poem, serve to strengthen it and to deepen the pathos of the whole. The passion and pathos of *The Prisoner of Chios* are cumulative in their effect, and grow through the account of the prisoner himself, and of the deaths of his brothers beside him; of the madness of the prisoner, followed by despair: of the bird's song, coming suddenly in his solitude and desolation: of his final state when long imprisonment has made him unfit for freedom.

The fine sonnet, beginning

"Eternal spirit of the chainless Min:"

which would be impressive by itself, both gains and gives by being used as introduction to the narrative.

*Mazeppa* has for introduction the lines in which Byron, following the facts briefly stated by Voltaire in his history of Charles XII of Sweden, relates the hardships and adventures of Charles after the disastrous battle of Pultowa, on July 8, 1709. The poet represents Mazeppa, then Prince of Ukrania and an old man, as endeavouring to cheer the king with the account of his wild and terrible ride when he was a young man. Here, also, Byron took his hint — no more — from Voltaire. *Mazeppa*, published in 1819, was a reversion to the manner that Byron got from Scott, and now used with surer effect than at first. After the ride once begins, *Mazeppa* is rapid and fiery to the end, and the episode of the wolves is as preternaturally vivid as anything in *Tam o' Shanter*. Indeed, notwithstanding the length of the work, you will at once see a kinship between Mazeppa's ride and the rides of Tam o' Shanter, Paul Revere, and Browning's unnamed hero who rode from Ghent to Aix. The swift, uninterrupted movement is for most readers the main interest, and for many readers the only interest, in verses of this sort. Yet Byron's narrative, like Browning's, is helped to reality by the rapid succession of objects that take the rider's eye. The steed, the wolves, the stream, the wood, the coming sun, the "thousand horse and none to ride," are all a part of your experience while you read, as they were of Mazeppa's while

he rode. Movement and vision hurry on together in the strong, rushing verse.

The Byron of these two episodic poems is, of course, not the Byron whose genius set all Europe on fire. But *The Prisoner* and *Mazeppa*, like everything else from his pen, were eagerly read, and did not lack comfort for despairing lovers of freedom on a continent where, not without help from free England, the old despotisms were everywhere being re-established.

### III. BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

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Biography and Criticism. — *Life*, by J. Nichol (English Men of Letters); *Life*, by R. Noel (Great Writers); *Essays*, by T. B. Macaulay; by W. Hazlitt (*The Spirit of the Age*).

## SELECTIONS FROM LORD BYRON

	PAGE
THE PRISONER OF CHILLON . . . . .	23
MAZEPPA . . . . .	38

# SELECTIONS FROM LORD BYRON

## I

### THE PRISONER OF CHILLON

#### SONNET ON CHILLON

ETERNAL Spirit of the chainless Mind !  
Brightest in dungeons, Liberty ! thou art :  
For there thy habitation is the heart —  
The heart which love of thee alone can bind ;  
And when thy sons to fetters are consigned — 5  
To fetters, and the damp vault's dayless gloom,  
Their country conquers with their martyrdom,  
And Freedom's fame finds wings on every wind.  
Chillon ! thy prison is a holy place,  
And thy sad floor an altar — for 'twas trod, 10  
Until his very steps have left a trace  
Worn, as if thy cold pavement were a sod,  
By Bonnivard ! — May none those marks efface !  
For they appeal from tyranny to God.

## I

My hair is grey, but not with years, 15  
Nor grew it white  
In a single night,  
As men's have grown from sudden fears :



My limbs are bowed, though not with toil,  
But rusted with a vile repose, 20  
For they have been a dungeon's spoil,  
And mine has been the fate of those  
To whom the goodly earth and air  
Are banned, and barred — forbidden fare ;  
But this was for my father's faith 25  
I suffered chains and courted death ;  
That father perished at the stake  
For tenets he would not forsake ;  
And for the same his lineal race  
In darkness found a dwelling place ; 30  
We were seven — who now are one,  
Six in youth, and one in age,  
Finished as they had begun,  
Proud of Persecution's rage ;  
One in fire, and two in field, 35  
Their belief with blood have sealed,  
Dying as their father died,  
For the God their foes denied ; —  
Three were in a dungeon cast,  
Of whom this wreck is left the last. 40

## II

There are seven pillars of Gothic mould,  
In Chillon's dungeons deep and old,  
There are seven columns, massy and grey,  
Dim with a dull imprisoned ray,  
A sunbeam which hath lost its way, 45

And through the crevice and the cleft  
Of the thick wall is fallen and left ;  
Creeping o'er the floor so damp,  
Like a marsh's meteor lamp :  
And in each pillar there is a ring, 50  
    And in each ring there is a chain ;  
That iron is a cankering thing,  
    For in these limbs its teeth remain,  
With marks that will not wear away,  
Till I have done with this new day, 55  
Which now is painful to these eyes,  
Which have not seen the sun so rise  
For years — I cannot count them o'er,  
I lost their long and heavy score  
When my last brother dropped and died, 60  
And I lay living by his side.

## III

They chained us each to a column stone,  
And we were three — yet, each alone ;  
We could not move a single pace,  
We could not see each other's face, 65  
But with that pale and livid light  
That made us strangers in our sight :  
And thus together — yet apart,  
Fettered in hand, but joined in heart,  
'Twas still some solace in the dearth 70  
Of the pure elements of earth,  
To hearken to each other's speech,  
And each turn comforter to each

With some new hope, or legend old,  
Or song heroically bold; 75  
But even these at length grew cold.  
Our voices took a dreary tone,  
An echo of the dungeon stone,  
A grating sound, not full and free,  
As they of yore were wont to be : 80  
It might be fancy — but to me  
They never sounded like our own.

## IV

I was the eldest of the three,  
And to uphold and cheer the rest  
I ought to do — and did my best — 85  
And each did well in his degree.  
The youngest, whom my father loved,  
Because our mother's brow was given  
To him, with eyes as blue as heaven —  
For him my soul was sorely moved : 90  
And truly might it be distressed  
To see such bird in such a nest ;  
For he was beautiful as day —  
(When day was beautiful to me  
As to young eagles, being free) — 95  
A polar day, which will not see  
A sunset till its summer's gone,  
Its sleepless summer of long light,  
The snow-clad offspring of the sun :  
And thus he was as pure and bright, 100  
And in his natural spirit gay,

With tears for naught but others' ills,  
And then they flowed like mountain rills,  
Unless he could assuage the woe  
Which he abhorred to view below. 105

## V

The other was as pure of mind,  
But formed to combat with his kind ;  
Strong in his frame, and of a mood  
Which 'gainst the world in war had stood,  
And perished in the foremost rank 110

With joy : — but not in chains to pine :  
His spirit withered with their clank,  
I saw it silently decline —

And so perchance in sooth did mine :  
But yet I forced it on to cheer 115  
Those relics of a home so dear.

He was a hunter of the hills,  
Had followed there the deer and wolf ;  
To him this dungeon was a gulf,  
And fettered feet the worst of ills. 120

## VI

Lake Lemán lies by Chillon's walls :  
A thousand feet in depth below  
Its massy waters meet and flow ;  
Thus much the fathom-line was sent  
From Chillon's snow-white battlement, 125  
Which round about the wave inthralls :

A double dungeon wall and wave  
Have made — and like a living grave.  
Below the surface of the lake  
The dark vault lies wherein we lay : 130  
We heard it ripple night and day ;  
    Sounding o'er our heads it knocked ;  
And I have felt the winter's spray  
Wash through the bars when winds were high  
And wanton in the happy sky ; 135  
    And then the very rock hath rocked,  
    And I have felt it shake, unshocked,  
Because I could have smiled to see  
The death that would have set me free.

## VII

I said my nearer brother pined, 140  
I said his mighty heart declined,  
He loathed and put away his food ;  
It was not that 'twas coarse and rude,  
For we were used to hunter's fare,  
And for the like had little care : 145  
The milk drawn from the mountain goat  
Was changed for water from the moat,  
Our bread was such as captives' tears  
Have moistened many a thousand years,  
Since man first pent his fellow men 150  
Like brutes within an iron den ;  
But what were these to us or him ?  
These wasted not his heart or limb ;



My brother's soul was of that mould  
Which in a palace had grown cold, 155  
Had his free breathing been denied  
The range of the steep mountain's side ;  
But why delay the truth ? — he died.  
I saw, and could not hold his head,  
Nor reach his dying hand — nor dead, — 160  
Though hard I strove, but strove in vain,  
To rend and gnash my bonds in twain.  
He died — and they unlocked his chain,  
And scooped for him a shallow grave  
Even from the cold earth of our cave. 165  
I begged them, as a boon, to lay  
His corse in dust whereon the day  
Might shine — it was a foolish thought,  
But then within my brain it wrought,  
That even in death his freeborn breast 170  
In such a dungeon could not rest.  
I might have spared my idle prayer —  
They coldly laughed — and laid him there :  
The flat and turfless earth above  
The being we so much did love ; 175  
His empty chain above it leant,  
Such Murder's fitting monument !

## VIII

But he, the favourite and the flower,  
Most cherished since his natal hour,  
His mother's image in fair face, 180  
The infant love of all his race,

His martyred father's dearest thought,  
My latest care, for whom I sought  
To hoard my life, that his might be  
Less wretched now, and one day free ; 185  
He, too, who yet had held untired  
A spirit natural or inspired —  
He, too, was struck, and day by day  
Was withered on the stalk away.  
Oh, God ! it is a fearful thing 190  
To see the human soul take wing  
In any shape, in any mood :  
I've seen it rushing forth in blood,  
I've seen it on the breaking ocean  
Strive with a swoln convulsive motion, 195  
I've seen the sick and ghastly bed  
Of Sin delirious with its dread :  
But these were horrors — this was woe  
Unmixed with such — but sure and slow :  
He faded, and so calm and meek, 200  
So softly worn, so sweetly weak,  
So tearless, yet so tender — kind,  
And grieved for those he left behind ;  
With all the while a cheek whose bloom  
Was as a mockery of the tomb, 205  
Whose tints as gently sunk away  
As a departing rainbow's ray ;  
An eye of most transparent light,  
That almost made the dungeon bright ;  
And not a word of murmur — not 210  
A groan o'er his untimely lot, —

A little talk of better days,  
 A little hope my own to raise,  
 For I was sunk in silence — lost  
 In this last loss, of all the most ; 215  
 And then the sighs he would suppress  
 Of fainting Nature's feebleness,  
 More slowly drawn, grew less and less :  
 I listened, but I could not hear ;  
 I called, for I was wild with fear ; 220  
 I knew 'twas hopeless, but my dread  
 Would not be thus admonished ;  
 I called, and thought I heard a sound —  
 I burst my chain with one strong bound,  
 And rushed to him : — I found him not, 225  
 / only stirred in this black spot,  
 / only lived, / only drew  
 The accurséd breath of dungeon-dew ;  
 The last, the sole, the dearest link  
 Between me and the eternal brink, 230  
 Which bound me to my failing race,  
 Was broken in this fatal place.  
 One on the earth, and one beneath —  
 My brothers — both had ceased to breathe !  
 I took that hand which lay so still, 235  
 Alas ! my own was full as chill ;  
 I had not strength to stir, or strive,  
 But felt that I was still alive —  
 A frantic feeling, when we know  
 That what we love shall ne'er be so. 240  
 I know not why

I could not die,  
 I had no earthly hope — but faith,  
 And that forbade a selfish death.

## IX

What next befell me then and there 245  
 I know not well — I never knew —  
 First came the loss of light, and air,  
 And then of darkness too :  
 I had no thought, no feeling — none —  
 Among the stones I stood a stone, 250  
 And was, scarce conscious what I wist,  
 As shrubless crags within the mist ;  
 For all was blank, and bleak, and grey ;  
 It was not night — it was not day ;  
 It was not even the dungeon-light, 255  
 So hateful to my heavy sight,  
 But vacancy absorbing space,  
 And fixedness — without a place ;  
 There were no stars — no earth — no time — 259  
 No check — no change — no good — no crime —  
 But silence, and a stirless breath  
 Which neither was of life nor death ;  
 A sea of stagnant idleness,  
 Blind, boundless, mute, and motionless !

## X

A light broke in upon my brain, — 265  
 It was the carol of a bird ;  
 It ceased, and then it came again,

The sweetest song ear ever heard,  
And mine was thankful till my eyes  
Ran over with the glad surprise, 270  
And they that moment could not see  
I was the mate of misery ;

But then by dull degrees came back  
My senses to their wonted track ;  
I saw the dungeon walls and floor 275

Close slowly round me as before,  
I saw the glimmer of the sun  
Creeping as it before had done,  
But through the crevice where it came  
That bird was perched, as fond and tame, 280

And tamer than upon the tree ;  
A lovely bird, with azure wings,  
And song that said a thousand things,  
And seemed to say them all for me !

I never saw its like before, 285  
I ne'er shall see its likeness more :  
It seemed like me to want a mate,

But was not half so desolate,  
And it was come to love me when  
None lived to love me so again, 290  
And cheering from my dungeon's brink,  
Had brought me back to feel and think.

I know not if it late were free,  
Or broke its cage to perch on mine,  
But knowing well captivity, 295

Sweet bird ! I could not wish for thine !  
Or if it were, in wingéd guise,



A visitant from Paradise ;  
For — Heaven forgive that thought ! the while  
Which made me both to weep and smile — 300  
I sometimes deemed that it might be  
My brother's soul come down to me ;  
But then at last away it flew,  
And then 'twas mortal well I knew,  
For he would never thus have flown — 305  
And left me twice so doubly lone, —  
Lone — as the corse within its shroud,  
Lone — as a solitary cloud,  
A single cloud on a sunny day,  
While all the rest of heaven is clear, 310  
A frown upon the atmosphere,  
That hath no business to appear  
When skies are blue, and earth is gay.

## XI

A kind of change came in my fate,  
My keepers grew compassionate ; 315  
I know not what had made them so,  
They were inured to sights of woe,  
But so it was : — my broken chain  
With links unfastened did remain,  
And it was liberty to stride 320  
Along my cell from side to side,  
And up and down, and then athwart,  
And tread it over every part ;  
And round the pillars one by one,  
Returning where my walk begun, 325

Avoiding only, as I trod,  
My brothers' graves without a sod ;  
For if I thought with heedless tread  
My step profaned their lowly bed,  
My breath came gaspingly and thick, 330  
And my crushed heart felt blind and sick.

## XII

I made a footing in the wall,  
It was not therefrom to escape,  
For I had buried one and all,  
Who loved me in a human shape ; 335  
And the whole earth would henceforth be  
A wider prison unto me :  
No child — no sire — no kin had I,  
No partner in my misery ;  
I thought of this, and I was glad, 340  
For thought of them had made me mad ;  
But I was curious to ascend  
To my barred windows, and to bend  
Once more, upon the mountains high,  
The quiet of a loving eye. 345

## XIII

I saw them — and they were the same,  
They were not changed like me in frame ;  
I saw their thousand years of snow  
On high — their wide long lake below,  
And the blue Rhone in fullest flow ; 350

I heard the torrents leap and gush  
O'er channelled rock and broken bush ;  
I saw the white-walled distant town,  
And whiter sails go skimming down ;  
And then there was a little isle, 355  
Which in my very face did smile,  
The only one in view ;  
A small green isle, it seemed no more,  
Scarce broader than my dungeon floor,  
But in it there were three tall trees, 360  
And o'er it blew the mountain breeze,  
And by it there were waters flowing,  
And on it there were young flowers growing,  
Of gentle breath and hue.  
The fish swam by the castle wall, 365  
And they seemed joyous each and all ;  
The eagle rode the rising blast,  
Methought he never flew so fast  
As then to me he seemed to fly ;  
And then new tears came in my eye, 370  
And I felt troubled — and would fain  
I had not left my recent chain ;  
And when I did descend again,  
The darkness of my dim abode  
Fell on me as a heavy load ; 375  
It was as is a new-dug grave,  
Closing o'er one we sought to save, —  
And yet my glance, too much opprest,  
Had almost need of such a rest.

## XIV

It might be months, or years, or days — 380  
I kept no count, I took no note —  
I had no hope my eyes to raise,  
And clear them of their dreary mote ;  
At last men came to set me free ;  
I asked not why, and recked not where ; 385  
It was at length the same to me,  
Fettered or fetterless to be,  
I learned to love despair.  
And thus when they appeared at last,  
And all my bonds aside were cast, 390  
These heavy walls to me had grown  
A hermitage — and all my own !  
And half I felt as they were come  
To tear me from a second home :  
With spiders I had friendship made, 395  
And watched them in their sullen trade,  
Had seen the mice by moonlight play,  
And why should I feel less than they ?  
We were all inmates of one place,  
And I, the monarch of each race, 400  
Had power to kill — yet, strange to tell !  
In quiet we had learned to dwell ;  
My very chains and I grew friends,  
So much a long communion tends  
To make us what we are : — even I 405  
Regained my freedom with a sigh.

## II

## MAZEPPA

## I

'Twas after dread Pultowa's day,  
When Fortune left the royal Swede —  
Around a slaughtered army lay,  
No more to combat and to bleed. 410  
The power and glory of the war,  
Faithless as their vain votaries, men,  
Had passed to the triumphant Czar,  
And Moscow's walls were safe again —  
Until a day more dark and drear 415  
And a more memorable year,  
Should give to slaughter and to shame  
A mightier host and haughtier name ;  
A greater wreck, a deeper fall,  
A shock to one — a thunderbolt to all. 420

## II

Such was the hazard of the die ;  
The wounded Charles was taught to fly  
By day and night through field and flood,  
Stained with his own and subjects' blood ;  
For thousands fell that flight to aid : 425  
And not a voice was heard to upbraid



Ambition in his humbled hour,  
When Truth had nought to dread from Power.  
His horse was slain, and Gieta gave  
His own — and died the Russians' slave. 430  
This, too, sinks after many a league  
Of well-sustained, but vain fatigue ;  
And in the depth of forests darkling,  
The watch-fires in the distance sparkling —  
The beacons of surrounding foes — 435  
A King must lay his limbs at length.  
Are these the laurels and repose  
For which the nations strain their strength?  
They laid him by a savage tree,  
In outworn Nature's agony ; 440  
His wounds were stiff, his limbs were stark ;  
The heavy hour was chill and dark ;  
The fever in his blood forbade  
A transient slumber's fitful aid :  
And thus it was ; but yet through all, 445  
Kinglike the Monarch bore his fall,  
And made, in this extreme of ill,  
His pangs the vassals of his will :  
All silent and subdued were they,  
As once the nations round him lay. 450

## III

A band of chiefs ! — alas ! how few,  
Since but the fleeting of a day  
Had thinned it ; but this wreck was true  
And chivalrous : upon the clay

Each sate him down, all sad and mute, 455  
Beside his monarch and his steed ;  
For danger levels man and brute,  
And all are fellows in their need.  
Among the rest, Mazeppa made  
His pillow in an old oak's shade — 460  
Himself as rough, and scarce less old,  
The Ukraine's Hetman, calm and bold ;  
But first, outspent with this long course,  
The Cossack prince rubbed down his horse,  
And made for him a leafy bed, 465  
And smoothed his fetlocks and his mane,  
And slacked his girth, and stripped his rein,  
And joyed to see how well he fed ;  
For until now he had the dread  
His wearied courser might refuse 470  
To browse beneath the midnight dews :  
But he was hardy as his lord,  
And little cared for bed and board ;  
But spirited and docile too,  
Whate'er was to be done, would do. 475  
Shaggy and swift, and strong of limb,  
All Tartar-like he carried him ;  
Obeyed his voice, and came to call,  
And knew him in the midst of all :  
Though thousands were around, — and Night, 480  
Without a star, pursued her flight, —  
That steed from sunset until dawn  
His chief would follow like a fawn.

## IV

This done, Mazeppa spread his cloak,  
And laid his lance beneath his oak, 485  
Felt if his arms in order good  
The long day's march had well withstood —  
If still the powder filled the pan,  
And flints unloosened kept their lock —  
His sabre's hilt and scabbard felt, 490  
And whether they had chafed his belt ;  
And next the venerable man,  
From out his havresack and can,  
Prepared and spread his slender stock ;  
And to the Monarch and his men 495  
The whole or portion offered then  
With far less of inquietude  
Than courtiers at a banquet would.  
And Charles of this his slender share  
With smiles partook a moment there, 500  
To force of cheer a greater show,  
And seem above both wounds and woe ; —  
And then he said — “ Of all our band,  
Though firm of heart and strong of hand,  
In skirmish, march, or forage, none 505  
Can less have said or more have done  
Than thee, Mazeppa ! On the earth  
So fit a pair had never birth,  
Since Alexander's days till now,  
As thy Bucephalus <sup>1</sup> and thou : 510

<sup>1</sup> The horse of Alexander the Great.

All Scythia's fame to thine should yield  
 For pricking on o'er flood and field."  
 Mazeppa answered — " Ill betide  
 'The school wherein I learned to ride ! "  
 Quoth Charles — " Old Hetman, wherefore so, 515  
 Since thou hast learned the art so well ? "  
 Mazeppa said — " 'Twere long to tell ;  
 And we have many a league to go,  
 With every now and then a blow,  
 And ten to one at least the foe, 520  
 Before our steeds may graze at ease,  
 Beyond the swift Borysthenes : <sup>1</sup>  
 And, Sire, your limbs have need of rest,  
 And I will be the sentinel  
 Of this your troop." — " But I request," 525  
 Said Sweden's monarch, " Thou wilt tell  
 This tale of thine, and I may reap,  
 Perchance, from this the boon of sleep ;  
 For at this moment from my eyes  
 The hope of present slumber flies." 530

" Well, Sire, with such a hope, I'll track  
 My seventy years of memory back :  
 I think 'twas in my twentieth spring, —  
 Ay, 'twas, — when Casimir was king —  
 John Casimir, — I was his page 535  
 Six summers, in my earlier age :  
 A learned monarch, faith ! was he,  
 And most unlike your Majesty ;

<sup>1</sup> The Dnieper.

He made no wars, and did not gain  
New realms to lose them back again; 540  
And (save debates in Warsaw's diet)  
He reigned in most unseemly quiet;  
Not that he had no cares to vex;  
He loved the muses and the Sex;  
And sometimes these so froward are, 545  
They made him wish himself at war;  
But soon his wrath being o'er, he took  
Another mistress — or new book:  
And then he gave prodigious fêtes —  
All Warsaw gathered round his gates 550  
To gaze upon his splendid court,  
And dames, and chiefs, of princely port.  
He was the Polish Solomon,  
So sung his poets, all but one,  
Who, being unpensioned, made a satire, 555  
And boasted that he could not flatter.  
It was a court of jousts and mimes,  
Where every courtier tried at rhymes;  
Even I for once produced some verses,  
And signed my odes 'Despairing Thyrsis.' 560  
There was a certain Palatine,  
A Count of far and high descent,  
Rich as a salt or silver mine;  
And he was proud, ye may divine,  
As if from Heaven he had been sent; 565  
He had such wealth in blood and ore  
As few could match beneath the throne;  
And he would gaze upon his store,



And o'er his pedigree would pore,  
Until by some confusion led, 570  
Which almost looked like want of head,  
He thought their merits were his own.  
His wife was not of this opinion ;  
His junior she by thirty years,  
Grew daily tired of his dominion ; 575  
And, after wishes, hopes, and fears,  
To Virtue a few farewell tears,  
A restless dream or two — some glances  
At Warsaw's youth — some songs, and dances,  
Awaited but the usual chances, 580  
Those happy accidents which render  
The coldest dames so very tender,  
To deck her Count with titles given,  
'Tis said, as passports into Heaven ;  
But, strange to say, they rarely boast 585  
Of these, who have deserved them most.

## v

“ I was a goodly stripling then ;  
At seventy years I so may say,  
That there were few, or boys or men,  
Who, in my dawning time of day, 590  
Of vassal or of knight's degree,  
Could vie in vanities with me ;  
For I had strength — youth — gaiety,  
A port, not like to this ye see,  
But smooth, as all is rugged now ; 595  
For Time, and Care, and War, have ploughed

My very soul from out my brow ;  
And thus I should be disavowed  
By all my kind and kin, could they  
Compare my day and yesterday ; 600  
This change was wrought, too, long ere age  
Had ta'en my features for his page :  
With years, ye know, have not declined  
My strength — my courage — or my mind,  
Or at this hour I should not be 605  
Telling old tales beneath a tree,  
With starless skies my canopy.  
But let me on : Theresa's form —  
Methinks it glides before me now,  
Between me and yon chestnut's bough, 610  
The memory is so quick and warm ;  
And yet I find no words to tell  
The shape of her I loved so well :  
She had the Asiatic eye,  
Such as our Turkish neighbourhood 615  
Hath mingled with our Polish blood,  
Dark as above us is the sky ;  
But through it stole a tender light,  
Like the first moonrise of midnight ;  
Large, dark, and swimming in the stream, 620  
Which seemed to melt to its own beam ;  
All love, half languor, and half fire,  
Like saints that at the stake expire,  
And lift their raptured looks on high,  
As though it were a joy to die. 625  
A brow like a midsummer lake,

Transparent with the sun therein,  
When waves no murmur dare to make,  
And Heaven beholds her face within.  
A cheek and lip — but why proceed? 630  
I loved her then, I love her still;  
And such as I am, love indeed  
In fierce extremes — in good and ill.  
But still we love even in our rage,  
And haunted to our very age 635  
With the vain shadow of the past,—  
As is Mazeppa to the last.

## VI

“We met — we gazed — I saw, and sighed;  
She did not speak, and yet replied;  
There are ten thousand tones and signs 640  
We hear and see, but none defines —  
Involuntary sparks of thought,  
Which strike from out the heart o’erwrought,  
And form a strange intelligence,  
Alike mysterious and intense, 645  
Which link the burning chain that binds,  
Without their will, young hearts and minds;  
Conveying, as the electric wire,  
We know not how, the absorbing fire.  
I saw, and sighed — in silence wept, 650  
And still reluctant distance kept,  
Until I was made known to her,  
And we might then and there confer  
Without suspicion — then, even then,

I longed, and was resolved to speak ; 655  
But on my lips they died again,  
The accents tremulous and weak,  
Until one hour. — There is a game,  
A frivolous and foolish play,  
Wherewith we while away the day ; 660  
It is — I have forgot the name —  
And we to this, it seems, were set,  
By some strange chance, which I forget :  
I recked not if I won or lost,  
It was enough for me to be 665  
So near to hear, and oh ! to see  
The being whom I loved the most.  
I watched her as a sentinel,  
(May ours this dark night watch as well !)  
Until I saw, and thus it was, 670  
That she was pensive, nor perceived  
Her occupation, nor was grieved  
Nor glad to lose or gain ; but still  
Played on for hours, as if her will  
Yet bound her to the place, though not 675  
That hers might be the winning lot.  
Then through my brain the thought did pass,  
Even as a flash of lightning there,  
That there was something in her air  
Which would not doom me to despair ; 680  
And on the thought my words broke forth,  
All incoherent as they were ;  
Their eloquence was little worth,  
But yet she listened — 'tis enough —



Who listens once will listen twice ; 685  
Her heart, be sure, is not of ice —  
And one refusal no rebuff.

## VII

“ I loved, and was beloved again —  
They tell me, Sire, you never knew  
Those gentle frailties ; if 'tis true, 690  
I shorten all my joy or pain ;  
To you 'twould seem absurd as vain ;  
But all men are not born to reign,  
Or o'er their passions, or as you  
Thus o'er themselves and nations too. 695  
I am — or rather *was* — a Prince,  
A chief of thousands, and could lead  
Them on where each would foremost bleed ;  
But could not o'er myself evince  
The like control — But to resume : 700  
I loved, and was beloved again ;  
In sooth, it is a happy doom,  
But yet where happiest ends in pain. —  
We met in secret, and the hour  
Which led me to that lady's bower 705  
Was fiery Expectation's dower.  
My days and nights were nothing — all  
Except that hour which doth recall,  
In the long lapse from youth to age,  
No other like itself: I'd give 710  
The Ukraine back again to live  
It o'er once more, and be a page,



The happy page, who was the lord  
 Of one soft heart, and his own sword,  
 And had no other gem nor wealth, 715  
 Save Nature's gift of Youth and Health.  
 We met in secret — doubly sweet,  
 Some say, they find it so to meet ;  
 I know not that — I would have given  
     My life but to have called her mine 720  
 In the full view of Earth and Heaven ;  
     For I did oft and long repine  
 That we could only meet by stealth.

VIII

“ For lovers there are many eyes,  
     And such there were on us ; the Devil 725  
     On such occasions should be civil —  
 The Devil ! — I'm loath to do him wrong,  
     It might be some untoward saint,  
 Who would not be at rest too long,  
     But to his pious bile gave vent — 730  
 But one fair night, some lurking spies  
 Surprised and seized us both.  
 The Count was something more than wroth —  
 I was unarmed ; but if in steel,  
 All cap-à-pie from head to heel, 735  
 What 'gainst their numbers could I do ?  
 'Twas near his castle, far away  
     From city or from succour near,  
 And almost on the break of day ;  
 I did not think to see another, 740

My moments seemed reduced to few ;  
And with one prayer to Mary Mother,  
And, it may be, a saint or two,  
As I resigned me to my fate,  
They led me to the castle gate : 745  
Theresa's doom I never knew,  
Our lot was henceforth separate. —  
An angry man, ye may opine,  
Was he, the proud Count Palatine ;  
And he had reason good to be, 750  
But he was most enraged lest such  
An accident should chance to touch  
Upon his future pedigree ;  
Nor less amazed, that such a blot  
His noble 'scutcheon should have got, 755  
While he was highest of his line ;  
Because unto himself he seemed  
The first of men, nor less he deemed  
In others' eyes, and most in mine.  
'Sdeath ! with a *page* — perchance a king 760  
Had reconciled him to the thing ;  
But with a stripling of a page —  
I felt — but cannot paint his rage.

## IX

“ ‘ Bring forth the horse ! ’ — the horse was brought !  
In truth, he was a noble steed, 765  
A Tartar of the Ukraine breed,  
Who looked as though the speed of thought  
Were in his limbs ; but he was wild,

Wild as the wild deer, and untaught,  
With spur and bridle undefiled — 770

'Twas but a day he had been caught;  
And snorting, with erected mane,  
And struggling fiercely, but in vain,  
In the full foam of wrath and dread  
To me the desert-born was led : 775  
They bound me on, that menial throng,  
Upon his back with many a thong ;  
They loosed him with a sudden lash —  
Away ! — away ! — and on we dash ! —  
Torrents less rapid and less rash. 780

## X

“ Away ! — away ! — My breath was gone,  
I saw not where he hurried on :  
'Twas scarcely yet the break of day,  
And on he foamed — away ! — away !  
The last of human sounds which rose, 785  
As I was darted from my foes,  
Was the wild shout of savage laughter,  
Which on the wind came roaring after  
A moment from that rabble rout :  
With sudden wrath I wrenched my head, 790  
And snapped the cord, which to the mane  
Had bound my neck in lieu of rein,  
And, writhing half my form about,  
Howled back my curse ; but 'midst the tread,  
The thunder of my courser's speed, 795  
Perchance they did not hear nor heed :

It vexes me — for I would fain  
Have paid their insult back again.

I paid it well in after days :

There is not of that castle gate,  
Its drawbridge and portcullis' weight,  
Stone — bar — moat — bridge — or barrier left ;  
Nor of its fields a blade of grass,

800

Save what grows on a ridge of wall,

Where stood the hearth-stone of the hall ;

805

And many a time ye there might pass,  
Nor dream that e'er the fortress was.

I saw its turrets in a blaze,

Their crackling battlements all cleft,

And the hot lead pour down like rain

810

From off the scorched and blackening roof  
Whose thickness was not vengeance-proof.

They little thought that day of pain,  
When launched, as on the lightning's flash,  
They bade me to destruction dash,

815

That one day I should come again,  
With twice five thousand horse, to thank

The Count for his uncourteous ride.

They played me then a bitter prank,

When, with the wild horse for my guide,

820

They bound me to his foaming flank :

At length I played them one as frank —

For Time at last sets all things even —

And if we do but watch the hour,

There never yet was human power

825

Which could evade, if unforgiven,



The patient search and vigil long  
Of him who treasures up a wrong.

## XI

“ Away ! — away ! — my steed and I,  
Upon the pinions of the wind !

830

All human dwellings left behind,  
We sped like meteors through the sky,  
When with its crackling sound the night  
Is chequered with the Northern light.

Town — village — none were on our track,

835

But a wild plain of far extent,  
And bounded by a forest black ;

And, save the scarce seen battlement  
On distant heights of some strong hold,  
Against the Tartars built of old,

840

No trace of man. The year before  
A Turkish army had marched o'er ;  
And where the Spahi's hoof hath trod,  
The verdure flies the bloody sod :

The sky was dull, and dim, and grey,

845

And a low breeze crept moaning by —

I could have answered with a sigh —  
But fast we fled, — away ! — away ! —

And I could neither sigh nor pray ;

And my cold sweat-drops fell like rain

850

Upon the courser's bristling mane ;

But, snorting still with rage and fear,

He flew upon his far career :

At times I almost thought, indeed,



He must have slackened in his speed ; 855  
But no — my bound and slender frame  
Was nothing to his angry might,  
And merely like a spur became :  
Each motion which I made to free  
My swoln limbs from their agony 860  
Increased his fury and affright :  
I tried my voice, — 'twas faint and low —  
But yet he swerved as from a blow ;  
And, starting to each accent, sprang  
As from a sudden trumpet's clang : 865  
Meantime my cords were wet with gore,  
Which, oozing through my limbs, ran o'er ;  
And in my tongue the thirst became  
A something fierier far than flame.

## XII

“ We neared the wild wood — 'twas so wide, 870  
I saw no bounds on either side :  
'Twas studded with old sturdy trees,  
That bent not to the roughest breeze  
Which howls down from Siberia's waste,  
And strips the forest in its haste, — 875  
But these were few and far between,  
Set thick with shrubs more young and green,  
Luxuriant with their annual leaves,  
Ere strown by those autumnal eves  
That nip the forest's foliage dead, 880  
Discoloured with a lifeless red,  
Which stands thereon like stiffened gore

Upon the slain when battle's o'er ;  
And some long winter's night hath shed  
Its frost o'er every tombless head — 885  
So cold and stark — the raven's beak  
May peck unpierced each frozen cheek :  
'Twas a wild waste of underwood,  
And here and there a chestnut stood,  
The strong oak, and the hardy pine ; 890  
    But far apart — and well it were,  
Or else a different lot were mine —  
    The boughs gave way, and did not tear  
My limbs ; and I found strength to bear  
My wounds, already scarred with cold ; 895  
My bonds forbade to loose my hold.  
We rustled through the leaves like wind, —  
Left shrubs, and trees, and wolves behind ;  
By night I heard them on the track,  
Their troop came hard upon our back, 900  
With their long gallop, which can tire  
The hound's deep hate, and hunter's fire :  
Where'er we flew they followed on,  
Nor left us with the morning sun ;  
Behind I saw them, scarce a rood, 905  
At day-break winding through the wood,  
And through the night had heard their feet  
Their stealing, rustling step repeat.  
Oh ! how I wished for spear or sword,  
At least to die amidst the horde, 910  
And perish — if it must be so —  
At bay, destroying many a foe !

When first my courser's race begun,  
 I wished the goal already won ;  
 But now I doubted strength and speed : 915  
 Vain doubt ! his swift and savage breed  
 Had nerved him like the mountain-roe —  
 Nor faster falls the blinding snow  
 Which whelms the peasant near the door  
 Whose threshold he shall cross no more, 920  
 Bewildered with the dazzling blast,  
 Than through the forest-paths he passed —  
 Untired, untamed, and worse than wild —  
 All furious as a favoured child  
 Balked of its wish ; or — fiercer still — 925  
 A woman piqued — who has her will !

## XIII

“ The wood was passed ; 'twas more than noon,  
 But chill the air, although in June ;  
 Or it might be my veins ran cold —  
 Prolonged endurance tames the bold ; 930  
 And I was then not what I seem,  
 But headlong as a wintry stream,  
 And wore my feelings out before  
 I well could count their causes o'er :  
 And what with fury, fear, and wrath, 935  
 The tortures which beset my path —  
 Cold — hunger — sorrow — shame — distress —  
 Thus bound in Nature's nakedness ;  
 Sprung from a race whose rising blood  
 When stirred beyond its calmer mood, 940

And trodden hard upon, is like  
The rattle-snake's, in act to strike —  
What marvel if this worn-out trunk  
Beneath its woes a moment sunk?  
The earth gave way, the skies rolled round, 945  
I seemed to sink upon the ground ;  
But erred — for I was fastly bound.  
My heart turned sick, my brain grew sore,  
And throbbed awhile, then beat no more :  
The skies spun like a mighty wheel ; 950  
I saw the trees like drunkards reel,  
And a slight flash sprang o'er my eyes,  
Which saw no farther. He who dies  
Can die no more than then I died,  
O'ertortured by that ghastly ride. 955  
I felt the blackness come and go,  
And strove to wake ; but could not make  
My senses climb up from below :  
I felt as on a plank at sea,  
When all the waves that dash o'er thee, 960  
At the same time upheave and overwhelm,  
And hurl thee towards a desert realm.  
My undulating life was as  
The fancied lights that flitting pass  
Our shut eyes in deep midnight, when 965  
Fever begins upon the brain ;  
But soon it passed, with little pain,  
But a confusion worse than such :  
I own that I should deem it much,  
Dying, to feel the same again ; 970



And yet I do suppose we must  
 Feel far more e'er we turn to dust !  
 No matter ! I have bared my brow  
 Full in Death's face — before — and now.

## XIV

“ My thoughts came back. Where was I? Cold, 975  
 And numb, and giddy : pulse by pulse  
 Life reassumed its lingering hold,  
 And throb by throb, — till grown a pang  
 Which for a moment would convulse,  
 My blood reflowed, though thick and chill ; 980  
 My ear with uncouth noises rang,  
 My heart began once more to thrill ;  
 My sight returned, though dim ; alas !  
 And thickened, as it were, with glass.  
 Methought the dash of waves was nigh ; 985  
 There was a gleam too of the sky,  
 Studded with stars ; — it is no dream ;  
 'The wild horse swims the wilder stream !  
 The bright broad river's gushing tide  
 Sweeps, winding onward, far and wide, 990  
 And we are half-way, struggling o'er  
 To yon unknown and silent shore.  
 The waters broke my hollow trance,  
 And with a temporary strength  
 My stiffened limbs were rebaptized. 995  
 My courser's broad breast proudly braves,  
 And dashes off the ascending waves,  
 And onward we advance !



We reach the slippery shore at length,  
A haven I but little prized, 1000  
For all behind was dark and drear,  
And all before was night and fear.  
How many hours of night or day  
In those suspended pangs I lay,  
I could not tell; I scarcely knew 1005  
If this were human breath I drew.

## XV

“ With glossy skin, and dripping mane,  
And reeling limbs, and reeking flank,  
The wild steed’s sinewy nerves still strain  
Up the repelling bank. 1010  
We gain the top : a boundless plain  
Spreads through the shadow of the night,  
And onward, onward, onward — seems,  
Like precipices in our dreams,  
To stretch beyond the sight ; 1015  
And here and there a speck of white,  
Or scattered spot of dusky green,  
In masses broke into the light,  
As rose the moon upon my right :  
But nought distinctly seen 1020  
In the dim waste would indicate  
The omen of a cottage gate ;  
No twinkling taper from afar  
Stood like a hospitable star ;  
Not even an ignis-fatuus <sup>1</sup> rose 1025

<sup>1</sup> Will o’ the wisp.

To make him merry with my woes :  
That very cheat had cheered me then !  
Although detected, welcome still,  
Reminding me, through every ill,  
Of the abodes of men.

1030

## XVI

“Onward we went — but slack and slow ;  
His savage force at length o’erspent,  
The drooping courser, faint and low,  
All feebly foaming went :  
A sickly infant had had power  
To guide him forward in that hour !  
But, useless all to me,  
His new-born tameness nought availed —  
My limbs were bound ; my force had failed,  
Perchance, had they been free..  
With feeble effort still I tried  
To rend the bonds so starkly tied,  
But still it was in vain ;  
My limbs were only wrung the more,  
And soon the idle strife gave o’er,  
Which but prolonged their pain.  
The dizzy race seemed almost done,  
Although no goal was nearly won :  
Some streaks announced the coming sun —  
How slow, alas ! he came !  
Methought that mist of dawning grey  
Would never dapple into day,  
How heavily it rolled away !

1035

1040

1045

1050

Before the eastern flame  
Rose crimson, and deposed the stars, 1055  
And called the radiance from their cars,  
And filled the earth, from his deep throne,  
With lonely lustre, all his own.

## XVII

“ Uprose the sun ; the mists were curled  
Back from the solitary world 1060  
Which lay around — behind — before.  
What bootéd it to traverse o’er  
Plain — forest — river ? Man nor brute,  
Nor dint of hoof, nor print of foot,  
Lay in the wild luxuriant soil — 1065  
No sign of travel, none of toil —  
The very air was mute :  
And not an insect’s shrill small horn,  
Nor matin bird’s new voice was borne  
From herb nor thicket. Many a *werst*, 1070  
Panting as if his heart would burst,  
The weary brute still staggered on ;  
And still we were — or seemed — alone :  
At length, while reeling on our way,  
Methought I heard a courser neigh, 1075  
From out yon tuft of blackening firs.  
Is it the wind those branches stirs ?  
No, no ! From out the forest prance  
A trampling troop ; I see them come !  
In one vast squadron they advance ! 1080  
I strove to cry — my lips were dumb !

The steeds rush on in plunging pride ;  
But where are they the reins to guide ?  
A thousand horse, and none to ride !  
With flowing tail, and flying mane, 1085  
Wide nostrils never stretched by pain,  
Mouths bloodless to the bit or rein,  
And feet that iron never shod,  
And flanks unscarred by spur or rod,  
A thousand horse, the wild, the free, 1090  
Like waves that follow o'er the sea,  
Came thickly thundering on,  
As if our faint approach to meet !  
The sight re-nerved my courser's feet,  
A moment staggering, feebly fleet, 1095  
A moment, with a faint low neigh,  
He answered, and then fell !  
With gasps and glazing eyes he lay,  
And reeking limbs immovable,  
His first and last career is done ! 1100  
On came the troop — they saw him stoop,  
They saw me strangely bound along  
His back with many a bloody thong.  
They stop — they start — they snuff the air,  
Gallop a moment here and there, 1105  
Approach, retire, wheel round and round,  
Then plunging back with sudden bound,  
Headed by one black mighty steed,  
Who seemed the Patriarch of his breed,  
Without a single speck or hair 1110  
Of white upon his shaggy hide ;

'They snort — they foam — neigh — they swerve aside,  
And backward to the forest fly,  
By instinct, from a human eye.

'They left me there to my despair, 1115  
Linked to the dead and stiffening wretch,  
Whose lifeless limbs beneath me stretch,  
Relieved from that unwonted weight,  
From whence I could not extricate  
Nor him nor me — and there we lay, 1120

'The dying on the dead !  
I little deemed another day  
Would see my houseless, helpless head.

“ And there from morn to twilight bound,  
I felt the heavy hours toil round, 1125  
With just enough of life to see  
My last of suns go down on me,  
In hopeless certainty of mind,  
That makes us feel at length resigned  
To that which our foreboding years 1130  
Present the worst and last of fears :  
Inevitable — even a boon,  
Nor more unkind for coming soon,  
Yet shunned and dreaded with such care,  
As if it only were a snare 1135

'That Prudence might escape :  
At times both wished for and implored,  
At times sought with self-pointed sword,  
Yet still a dark and hideous close  
To even intolerable woes, 1140



And welcome in no shape.

And, strange to say, the sons of pleasure,  
They who have revelled beyond measure  
In beauty, wassail, wine, and treasure,  
Die calm, or calmer, oft than he 1145  
Whose heritage was Misery :

For he who hath in turn run through  
All that was beautiful and new,  
Hath nought to hope, and nought to leave ;  
And, save the future, (which is viewed 1150  
Not quite as men are base or good,  
But as their nerves may be endued,)

With nought perhaps to grieve :  
The wretch still hopes his woes must end,  
And Death, whom he should deem his friend, 1155  
Appears, to his distempered eyes,  
Arrived to rob him of his prize,  
The tree of his new Paradise.

To-morrow would have given him all,  
Repaid his pangs, repaired his fall ; 1160  
To-morrow would have been the first  
Of days no more deplored or curst,  
But bright, and long, and beckoning years,  
Seen dazzling through the mist of tears,  
Guerdon of many a painful hour ; 1165  
To-morrow would have given him power  
To rule — to shine — to smite — to save —  
And must it dawn upon his grave ?

## XVIII

“ The sun was sinking — still I lay  
Chained to the chill and stiffening steed ! 1170  
I thought to mingle there our clay ;  
And my dim eyes of death had need,  
No hope arose of being freed.  
I cast my last looks up the sky,  
And there between me and the sun 1175  
I saw the expecting raven fly,  
Who scarce would wait till both should die,  
Ere his repast begun ;  
He flew, and perched, then flew once more,  
And each time nearer than before ; 1180  
I saw his wing through twilight flit,  
And once so near me he alit  
I could have smote, but lacked the strength ;  
But the slight motion of my hand,  
And feeble scratching of the sand, 1185  
The exerted throat’s faint struggling noise,  
Which scarcely could be called a voice,  
Together scared him off at length.  
I know no more — my latest dream  
Is something of a lovely star 1190  
Which fixed my dull eyes from afar,  
And went and came with wandering beam,  
And of the cold — dull — swimming — dense  
Sensation of recurring sense,  
And then subsiding back to death, 1195  
And then again a little breath,

A little thrill — a short suspense,  
 An icy sickness curdling o'er  
 My heart, and sparks that crossed my brain —  
 A gasp — a throb — a start of pain, 1200  
 A sigh — and nothing more.

## XIX

“ I woke — where was I? — Do I see  
 A human face look down on me?  
 And doth a roof above me close?  
 Do these limbs on a couch repose? 1205  
 Is this a chamber where I lie?  
 And is it mortal yon bright eye,  
 That watches me with gentle glance?  
 I closed my own again once more,  
 As doubtful that my former trance 1210  
 Could not as yet be o'er.  
 A slender girl, long-haired, and tall,  
 Sate watching by the cottage wall:  
 The sparkle of her eye I caught,  
 Even with my first return of thought; 1215  
 For ever and anon she threw  
 A prying, pitying glance on me  
 With her black eyes so wild and free:  
 I gazed, and gazed, until I knew  
 No vision it could be, — 1220  
 But that I lived, and was released  
 From adding to the vulture's feast:  
 And when the Cossack maid beheld  
 My heavy eyes at length unsealed,

She smiled — and I essayed to speak, 1225  
But failed — and she approached, and made  
With lip and finger signs that said,  
I must not strive as yet to break  
The silence, till my strength should be  
Enough to leave my accents free ; 1230  
And then her hand on mine she laid,  
And smoothed the pillow for my head,  
And stole along on tiptoe tread,  
And gently oped the door, and spake  
In whispers — ne'er was voice so sweet ! 1235  
Even music followed her light feet ; —  
But those she called were not awake,  
And she went forth ; but, ere she passed,  
Another look on me she cast,  
Another sign she made, to say, 1240  
That I had nought to fear, that all  
Were near, at my command or call,  
And she would not delay  
Her due return : — while she was gone,  
Methought I felt too much alone. 1245

## XX

“ She came with mother and with sire —  
What need of more? — I will not tire  
With long recital of the rest,  
Since I became the Cossack's guest.  
They found me senseless on the plain, 1250  
They bore me to the nearest hut,  
They brought me into life again —

Me — one day o'er their realm to reign !

Thus the vain fool who strove to glut

His rage, refining on my pain,

1255

Sent me forth to the wilderness,

Bound — naked — bleeding — and alone,

To pass the desert to a throne, —

What mortal his own doom may guess ?

Let none despond, let none despair !

1260

To-morrow the Borysthenes

May see our coursers graze at ease

Upon his Turkish bank, — and never

Had I such welcome for a river

As I shall yield when safely there.

1265

Comrades, good night " — The Hetman threw

His length beneath the oak-tree shade,

With leafy couch already made —

A bed nor comfortless nor new

To him, who took his rest whene'er

1270

The hour arrived, no matter where :

His eyes the hastening slumbers steep. —

And if ye marvel Charles forgot

To thank his tale, *he* wondered not, —

The King had been an hour asleep !

1275



## WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

### I. LIFE

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH, Lake Poet and Laureate of England, has told his own story, and described the growth of his mind, in the poem called *The Prelude*. If you have read this, you know pretty thoroughly what kind of man he was, what sort of life he led, where he went, and what he did, and saw, and felt, and thought. The remaining facts in his biography are few and simple.

Some of these he has recorded for us in the memoirs which he dictated to his nephew, a former bishop of Lincoln. "I was born," he said, "at Cockermouth, in Cumberland, on April 7th, 1770, the second son of John Wordsworth, attorney-at-law. . . . My mother was Anne, only daughter of William Cookson, mercer, of Penrith. . . . My grandfather was the first of the name of Wordsworth who came into Westmoreland. . . . He was descended from a family who had been settled at Peniston, in Yorkshire, . . . probably before the Norman Conquest. . . . The time of my infancy and early boyhood was passed partly at Cockermouth, and partly with my mother's parents at Penrith, where my mother, in the year 1778, died of a decline. . . . My father

never recovered his usual cheerfulness of mind after this loss, and died when I was in my fourteenth year, a school-boy, just returned from Hawkshead, whither I had been sent with my elder brother Richard, in my ninth year.

“ I remember my mother only in some few situations, one of which was her pinning a nosegay to my breast, when I was going to say the catechism in the church. . . . She once said . . . that the only one of her five children about whose future life she was anxious was William ; and he, she said, would be remarkable, either for good or for evil. The cause of this was, that I was of a stiff, moody, and violent temper ; so much so that I remember going into the attics of my grandfather’s house at Penrith, upon some indignity having been put upon me, with the intention of destroying myself with one of the foils, which I knew was kept there. I took the foil in my hand, but my heart failed me.”

In spite of this anecdote, it is certain that Wordsworth, as a boy, was not at all morose or given to brooding. Of his early days at school he had “ little to say, but that they were very happy ones ” ; he would have us believe that his happiness lay in being free to read whatever books he liked ; but we know, better than he could have told us, that he was not the sort of boy who stays apart, by himself, with his head in a book. Some poets, like Thomas Gray, have been of that sort, — shy and sickly boys at school, writing Latin verses instead of playing cricket. Wordsworth, however, played all the games and had all the fun with the other boys.

*Don Quixote*, *Gil Blas*, *Gulliver's Travels*, and the many books he read were not what set his young spirit alight and alive. The boy who was father to this man, could skate, and handle a boat, and climb trees with the best of his schoolmates. A passage in *The Prelude* tells how, when skating on winter nights with his companions, playing at hare and hounds over the ice, Wordsworth sometimes glanced aside, alone, left the shouting racers, tried to cut across the flying reflection of a star, and chased its gleam along the glassy surface; or how, when he had let the wind carry him along, "the solitary cliffs wheeled by" in shadow, spinning past —

". . . as if the earth had rolled  
With visible motion her diurnal round!"

The joy and excitement of such active play, of running about the fields or woods by day and night, first woke and stirred the deep impulses of genius.

After this boyhood of happy liberty among the lakes, Wordsworth went up, in October, 1787, to St. John's College, Cambridge. Spenser, Ben Jonson, Marlowe, Dryden, Milton, and Gray had preceded him in that university of the English poets; Coleridge and Byron were to succeed him; but though not least among these shining names, as an undergraduate Wordsworth did not distinguish himself. He entered, a rustic and backward youth of seventeen, and four years later, taking his B.A. degree, left Cambridge with no definite plans for his future career.

He now lived for a short time, and on a small allow-

ance, in London. But he was not for the city, and — except in reveries like that of *Poor Susan* or the noble Sonnet on *Westminster Bridge*, — the city was not for him. He soon passed on, landed in France in November, 1791, was fired with the enthusiasms of the French Revolution, and within a year, feeling that all the hopes of man were at stake, and burning to become a “patriot of the world,” had determined to come forward as a leader of the Girondist party. Prudent friends at home, however, stopped his allowance, and forced him unwillingly to return to England.

The reaction and the disappointment which fell upon so many friends of the Revolution, became with Wordsworth, for several years, a settled gloom. This was soon lightened, however, and gradually dispersed, by the companionship of his sister Dorothy. In Dorsetshire first, where Coleridge visited them in 1797; then at Alfoxden in the Quantock Hills, where they had Coleridge for neighbour; and — by the close of the century — at Grasmere among the Lakes, the brother and sister lived in close intimacy and affection; Dorothy Wordsworth’s journal is therefore the best gateway to her brother’s poems. His marriage to Mary Hutchinson of Penrith, in 1802, brought him great and lifelong happiness, and formed a triple alliance in quiet felicity. The sonnets called *Personal Talk* will show you how they lived. They had a small boat on the lake, a small orchard and garden, and a still smaller cottage, covered with roses, honeysuckles, and a bright profusion of scarlet beans. The sister, however, was the more con-



stant companion of Wordsworth's walks, journeys, and hours of inspiration. The wife, though to her husband's eyes "a phantom of delight," was also "not too bright or good for human nature's daily food," and appears to have stayed by the cottage while the other two tramped among the hills and shores, talking, observing, admiring together. Both women understood the poet's genius, but it was Dorothy who evoked and cherished it, who brought him out of his dejection over the state of man, and confirmed his love of nature. In 1793, when his first small book of poems was published, she saw and named not only their merits but their faults. In 1797 she accompanied him and Coleridge on the famous walking tour when the *Ancient Mariner* was planned, and when the daily communion of these two great poets shaped the first volume of the *Lyrical Ballads*. These ballads were to be romantic in two senses. Coleridge chose to write on supernatural subjects, in such a way as to produce in his readers "that willing suspension of disbelief for the moment, which constitutes poetic faith"; Wordsworth, to write on familiar subjects in a simple style, and to cast a romantic light over ordinary persons and places. A year later the volume was published; and if you have read the poem with which it ends, the *Lines written above Tintern Abbey*, you not only know a good part of Wordsworth's message to the world, but can see what a great and fortunate debt he owed to his sister.

They made many journeys together: to Germany in 1798, where Wordsworth, wandering the frozen



streets of Goslar in a fur pelisse and dogskin bonnet, composed *Lucy Gray*, *Ruth*, *Nutting*, and the *Poet's Epitaph*, and began *The Prelude*; to France in 1802, when he wrote the sonnets on *Westminster Bridge* and *Calais Sands*; in 1803 to Scotland, where they met the Highland Girl on the shore of Loch Lomond; in 1820, with Mrs. Wordsworth and two or three friends, to Switzerland and Italy. These tours, and many which the poet made alone or with other companions, all helped him to write new things, or to finish things that he had begun.

But Wordsworth was never a wanderer; he was a home-keeper and a Cumberland dalesman. He lived at Grasmere with his wife and sister, and his children — John, Dora, Thomas, Catherine, and William. He was deeply attached to them all; and when Catherine and Thomas died, he could not endure living in the Parsonage of Grasmere, where the neighbouring churchyard continually reminded him of his loss. In 1813, therefore, the Wordsworths moved to Rydal Mount, above Rydal Lake.

Here the poet passed the remainder of his days. In 1814 Lord Lonsdale obtained for him a humble post as distributor of stamps for the county of Westmoreland. The work of this office left him free, however, to pace his terraces and murmur his verses (the cottagers were “glad to hear him *booing* about”), where every year a thrush sang in the tall ash tree and doves fluttered their osier cage among laburnum branches. Rydal — Mount and Water — cannot be separated

from his name, — the name of that poet who bequeathed to English poetry all the beauties of the English lake country, and who, hearing “the still, sad music of humanity,” was profoundly inspired by

“A motion and a spirit, that impels  
All thinking things, all objects of all thought,  
And rolls through all things.”

Thoughts, impulses, intimations which had lain dead for more than a century, others which had never before found utterance, flooded his mind daily among the Cumbrian hills. It was a rugged country, of hearty rains, of visionary mists on heights and in valleys, of still, clear, and delicate autumns. “The presence of a lake,” he once wrote, “is indispensable to exhibit in perfection one of these [autumn] days; . . . while looking on the unruffled waters, . . . the imagination by their aid is carried into recesses of feeling otherwise impenetrable.” Masses of rock, hurled down from the slopes into the water, lay “like stranded ships.” Tarns, or solitary pools, gleamed black and sullen, with “bold, heath-clad promontories.” The houses themselves, of unhewn stone, roofed with slates so old and rough as to be overgrown with lichens, mosses, ferns, and flowers, were “clothed in a vegetable garb,” and appeared “to be received into the bosom of the living principle of things.” — This was Wordsworth’s country for the rest of his life.

While living here, he published in 1814 the long poem called *The Excursion*. He published various

selections of poems down to the year of his death. Nearly all his best work, however, he did between 1798 and 1818. This was the summer and flood-tide of his powers. His later poems, like the *Memorials* (1822) and the *Ecclesiastical Sketches* in the *Poems* of 1822, show a gradual decline and stiffening, and — by comparison — a hollow repetition. The early glory faded into the light of common day. But in these years Wordsworth had waited, and the world had come round to him. Critics had long derided him; the *Edinburgh Review*, attacking *The Excursion*, had told him “this would never do.” But by 1837 he received grateful acknowledgments from “the vast continents of America.” Two years later he was given the honorary degree of D.C.L. at Oxford. In 1842 he was pensioned by the Crown with £300 a year, as a mark of public respect. In 1843, when his friend and admirer Southey died, leaving vacant the office of Poet Laureate, national sentiment could approve no successor but Wordsworth. The gray-haired poet, kneeling, kissed the hand of the young Queen, ruler of the people whose life and literature he had enriched so vastly.

He died at Rydal Mount, on April 23, 1850, full of years, and wisdom, and honour. All his days he had worked hard, lived simply, and been in earnest. He had never wavered from his purpose, — “to console the afflicted; to add sunshine to daylight by making the happy happier; to teach the young and gracious of every age to see, to think, and to feel.”



## II. POEMS

Boys and girls often find it hard to know Wordsworth well enough to love him, partly because he lacks so much of what makes other great poets attractive. He lacks, for example, direct outspoken passion. *Othello* and *Lear* are as far from him as the lyrics of Sappho and "My Love is like a red, red Rose." Neither drama nor epic is within Wordsworth's power: Michael, Margaret, the Wanderer, and the rest, are but christened aspects of the poet's thought, and *The Excursion*, with all its whistle-blowing, signal guns, and other preliminaries of departure, has been wickedly compared to Robinson Crusoe's first boat.

But what appears to be Wordsworth's weakness you will soon discover to be his strength, for although his range is narrow, within that range he is a master beyond all other poets in our language. The novelty, the almost complete originality, of his attitude and feeling toward Nature, as they delayed any wide acceptance of his work until he was more than middle-aged, so they have kept for Wordsworth a place that is all his own. Before he wrote there had been vague hints and gleams in English poetry of what is in Wordsworth the strongest impulse of his imagination. This most deeply felt impulse is the unbroken consciousness of a soul in Nature. Under rock and hill and vernal wood Wordsworth is sure of a spiritual presence,—a presence that animates all phenomena, from the most awe-inspiring spectacles of cloud and storm and lightning, to "the

meanest flower that blows." For one groping suggestion in earlier poets of the single, unseen life within the many aspects that solicit and charm the senses, there are in this poet a hundred outspoken expressions of belief. None is plainer or more impressive than the following, which must do duty for many:—

"Through primrose tufts, in that sweet bower,  
The periwinkle trailed its wreaths ;  
And 'tis my faith that every flower  
Enjoys the very air it breathes.

"The birds around me hopp'd and play'd,  
Their thoughts I cannot measure, —  
But the least motion which they made  
It seemed a thrill of pleasure.

"The budding twigs spread out their fan  
To catch the breezy air;  
And I must think, do all I can,  
That there was pleasure there."

You already know how much time Wordsworth passed with trees, flowers, birds, and mountain streams. When you consider how much more he found than the rest of us would find—without a genius to interpret for us—in these wonderful friends and teachers of his, it is not strange that there should have been "a fire in his eye, as if he saw something in objects more than the outward appearance." Not strange, either, that Hazlitt, who thus read the fire of Wordsworth's eye, should have spoken of his head as having a "drooping weight of thought and expression." The brilliant critic goes on,



recalling (invaluably for you and me) his impressionable youth and first acquaintance with poets: "We went over to All-Foxden again the day following, and Wordsworth read us the story of *Peter Bell* in the open air, and the comment upon it by his face and voice was very different from that of some later critics! Whatever might be thought of the poem, 'his face was as a book where men might read strange matters,' and he announced the fate of his hero in prophetic tones. There is a *chaunt* in the recitation both of Coleridge and Wordsworth which acts as a spell upon the hearer, and disarms the judgment."

It is becoming pretty clear, is it not, that Wordsworth took seriously and sincerely — as indeed, he took all things — his share in the plan of *The Lyrical Ballads*. As we have told you, Coleridge was to induce for his "shadows of imagination that willing suspension of disbelief for the moment, which constitutes poetic faith." Wordsworth's task was to be the poetical opposite of Coleridge's. Listen intently while the wonderful poet of the more-than-natural tells what was to be the function of the wonderful poet of the natural. "Mr. Wordsworth, on the other hand," says Coleridge, "was to propose to himself as his object, to give the charm of novelty to things of every day, and to excite a feeling analogous to the supernatural, by awakening the mind's attention from the lethargy of custom, and directing it to the loveliness and the wonders of the world before us; an inexhaustible treasure, but for which, in consequence of the film of familiarity and selfish solicitude,

we have eyes, yet see not, ears that hear not, and hearts that neither feel nor understand.”

“The loveliness and the wonders of the world before us!” To make us see what we have never seen before, to lift the veil of use and wont, and thus cause us to see again with delight what has become dull and common in our eyes,—this is indeed Wordsworth’s peculiar power. After the first decade of poetic production, no doubt, he exercised his benign power with swiftly diminishing frequency, and by the year 1818 it had almost wholly departed. Mystery and magic had so forsaken him, and left him so reduced in imagination, so hopelessly the prey of prosy, moralizing rhetoric, that the Queen made her Laureate of a man who, though he “uttered nothing base,” had for many unlaurelled years—and the same barrenness was to continue through the few years in which his brow was wreathed—had for a weary space uttered nothing of importance to those who regard poetry as one of the few most sacred elements of life.

But if you will put aside all that Wordsworth wrote before 1798 and most of what he wrote after 1808, if then you will lay yourselves open to the magical influence of his briefer (and those the best) numbers, you are likely—I venture to prophesy—to become ungrudging students of the most original English poet since Chaucer. Nor, in this free discipleship, need you trouble yourselves much about Wordsworth’s “theory of poetic diction.” His practice was better than his theory, and reached all the way from the almost bald simplicity of

*We are Seven* and the perfect simplicity of *The Daffodils*, to the Miltonic pomp of certain of the sonnets, and the full splendours of the great English poetic vocabulary in *The Yew Trees*. If there is no need of minute study of diction in your first reading of Wordsworth, still less is it necessary for you to inquire into Wordsworth's philosophy, or to attempt to reconcile his famous pantheism — hardened into dogma in *The Excursion* — with an ever closer adherence to the doctrines of conventional religion. Rather content yourselves with the simplicity, the sheer beauty and joy, the "emotion remembered in tranquillity," of the pieces in which Wordsworth is most "impelled," in which he is most the child of Nature and the friend of Man. Of this character, happily, are, almost without exception, the poems offered to you here. Your teachers will explain whatever may need explanation in the celebrated *Ode*. For the rest, an elementary knowledge of your own language, a first-hand acquaintance with the country (by land and water), and a good understanding with flowers, trees, birds, and natural-minded people, will enable you to read Wordsworth with pleasure, and afterward to qualify as pupils in his school.

But, we hear the head of the class explain, outdoors in England is very different from outdoors in this country. English oaks are not our oaks, their cuckoo is not ours, the skylark is *rara avis*, found only in cages, yew trees are not found at all, American rivers are not streams that a boy can jump, and primroses and daffodils — so far from growing by the river's brim or along



the margin of a bay—lead an unpoetic life in pots. All these differences undoubtedly exist, and the head of the class might go on to explain not only that neither “dalesmen” nor peasants live under the Stars and Stripes, but that in social structure and customs there is a century as well as a world of variance between the England of Wordsworth’s early manhood and the America of to-day. All these disparities are as undoubted as, for your purpose in reading Wordsworth, they are unimportant. For, even when he seems most to localize his subjects, the picture, the poem, the impassioned meditation of the verse, will make an appeal to readers of kindred minds that is not dulled by time or distance. Wordsworth often speaks of Nature as if she had been born and brought up in the Lake Country, but what he says of her is *lingua franca*. It is for lovers of great poetry everywhere.

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## SELECTIONS FROM WORDSWORTH

	PAGE
SHE WAS A PHANTOM OF DELIGHT . . . . .	85
SHE DWELT AMONG THE UNTRODDEN WAYS . . . . .	86
I TRAVELL'D AMONG UNKNOWN MEN . . . . .	86
THE EDUCATION OF NATURE . . . . .	87
A SLUMBER DID MY SPIRIT SEAL . . . . .	89
LUCY GRAY . . . . .	89
TO A DISTANT FRIEND . . . . .	92
DESIDERIA . . . . .	93
ODE TO DUTY . . . . .	93
ENGLAND AND SWITZERLAND, 1802 . . . . .	96
ON THE EXTINCTION OF THE VENETIAN REPUBLIC . . . . .	96
LONDON, 1802 . . . . .	97
THE SAME . . . . .	98
WHEN I HAVE BORNE IN MEMORY WHAT HAS TAMED . . . . .	98
SIMON LEE THE OLD HUNTSMAN . . . . .	99
A LESSON . . . . .	102
THE AFFLICTION OF MARGARET . . . . .	103
TO A SKYLARK . . . . .	106
THE GREEN LINNET . . . . .	107



	PAGE
TO THE CUCKOO . . . . .	109
UPON WESTMINSTER BRIDGE, SEPT. 3, 1802 . . . . .	110
COMPOSED AT NEIDPATH CASTLE, THE PROPERTY OF LORD QUEENSBERRY, 1803 . . . . .	111
ADMONITION TO A TRAVELLER . . . . .	111
TO THE HIGHLAND GIRL OF INVERSNEYDE . . . . .	112
THE REAPER . . . . .	115
THE REVERIE OF POOR SUSAN . . . . .	116
THE DAFFODILS . . . . .	117
TO THE DAISY . . . . .	118
YARROW UNVISITED: 1803 . . . . .	120
YARROW VISITED: SEPTEMBER, 1814 . . . . .	122
BY THE SEA . . . . .	126
TO SLEEP . . . . .	126
THE INNER VISION . . . . .	127
WRITTEN IN EARLY SPRING . . . . .	128
RUTH: OR THE INFLUENCES OF NATURE . . . . .	129
NATURE AND THE POET . . . . .	138
GLEN-ALMAIN, THE NARROW GLEN . . . . .	141
THE WORLD IS TOO MUCH WITH US; LATE AND SOON . . . . .	142
WITHIN KING'S COLLEGE CHAPEL, CAMBRIDGE . . . . .	143
THE TWO APRIL MORNINGS . . . . .	143
THE FOUNTAIN . . . . .	146
THE TROSACHS . . . . .	149
MY HEART LEAPS UP WHEN I BEHOLD . . . . .	149
ODE ON INTIMATIONS OF IMMORTALITY . . . . .	150

# SELECTIONS FROM WORDSWORTH

## I

SHE was a Phantom of delight  
When first she gleam'd upon my sight ;  
A lovely Apparition, sent  
To be a moment's ornament ;  
Her eyes as stars of twilight fair ; 5  
Like 'Twilight's, too, her dusky hair ;  
But all things else about her drawn  
From May-time and the cheerful dawn ;  
A dancing shape, an image gay,  
To haunt, to startle, and waylay. 10

I saw her upon nearer view,  
A Spirit, yet a Woman too !  
Her household motions light and free,  
And steps of virgin-liberty ;  
A countenance in which did meet 15  
Sweet records, promises as sweet ;  
A creature not too bright or good  
For human nature's daily food,  
For transient sorrows, simple wiles,  
Praise, blame, love, kisses, tears, and smiles. 20

And now I see with eye serene  
 The very pulse of the machine ;  
 A being breathing thoughtful breath,  
 A traveller between life and death :  
 The reason firm, the temperate will, 25  
 Endurance, foresight, strength, and skill ;  
 A perfect Woman, nobly plann'd  
 To warn, to comfort, and command ;  
 And yet a Spirit still, and bright  
 With something of an angel-light. 30

## II

She dwelt among the untrodden ways  
 Beside the springs of Dove ;  
 A maid whom there were none to praise,  
 And very few to love.

A violet by a mossy stone 35  
 Half-hidden from the eye !  
 — Fair as a star, when only one  
 Is shining in the sky.

She lived unknown, and few could know  
 When Lucy ceased to be ; 40  
 But she is in her grave, and, oh,  
 The difference to me !

## III

I travell'd among unknown men  
 In lands beyond the sea ;

Selected Poems 87

Nor, England ! did I know till then 45  
What love I bore to thee.

'Tis past, that melancholy dream !  
Nor will I quit thy shore  
A second time ; for still I seem  
To love thee more and more. 50

Among thy mountains did I feel  
The joy of my desire ;  
And she I cherish'd turn'd her wheel  
Beside an English fire.

Thy mornings show'd, thy nights conceal'd 55  
The bowers where Lucy play'd ;  
And thine too is the last green field  
That Lucy's eyes survey'd.

IV

THE EDUCATION OF NATURE

Three years she grew in sun and shower ;  
Then Nature said, " A lovelier flower 60  
On earth was never sown :  
'This Child I to myself will take ;  
She shall be mine, and I will make  
A lady of my own.

" Myself will to my darling be 65  
Both law and impulse : and with me  
The girl, in rock and plain,

In earth and heaven, in glade and bower,  
Shall feel an overseeing power  
To kindle or restrain.

70

“ She shall be sportive as the fawn  
That wild with glee across the lawn  
Or up the mountain springs ;  
And hers shall be the breathing balm,  
And hers the silence and the calm  
Of mute insensate things.

75

“ The floating clouds their state shall lend  
To her ; for her the willow bend ;  
Nor shall she fail to see  
Ev’n in the motions of the storm  
Grace that shall mould the maiden’s form  
By silent sympathy.

80

“ The stars of midnight shall be dear  
To her ; and she shall lean her ear  
In many a secret place  
Where rivulets dance their wayward round,  
And beauty born of murmuring sound  
Shall pass into her face.

85

“ And vital feelings of delight  
Shall rear her form to stately height,  
Her virgin bosom swell ;  
Such thoughts to Lucy I will give  
While she and I together live  
Here in this happy dell.”

90



Thus Nature spake — The work was done — 95  
 How soon my Lucy's race was run !  
 She died, and left to me  
 This heath, this calm and quiet scene ;  
 The memory of what has been,  
 And never more will be. 100

V

A slumber did my spirit seal ;  
 I had no human fears :  
 She seem'd a thing that could not feel  
 The touch of earthly years.  
 No motion has she now, no force ; 105  
 She neither hears nor sees ;  
 Roll'd round in earth's diurnal-course  
 With rocks, and stones, and trees.

VI

LUCY GRAY

Oft I had heard of Lucy Gray :  
 And when I cross'd the wild, 110  
 I chanced to see at break of day  
 The solitary child.  
 No mate, no comrade Lucy knew ;  
 She dwelt on a wide moor,  
 The sweetest thing that ever grew 115  
 Beside a human door !

You yet may spy the fawn at play,  
The hare upon the green ;  
But the sweet face of Lucy Gray  
Will never more be seen.

120

“ To-night will be a stormy night —  
You to the town must go ;  
And take a lantern, Child, to light  
Your mother through the snow.”

“ That, Father ! will I gladly do :  
'Tis scarcely afternoon —  
The minster-clock<sup>1</sup> has just struck two,  
And yonder is the moon ! ”

125

At this the father raised his hook,  
And snapp'd a faggot-band ;  
He plied his work ; — and Lucy took  
The lantern in her hand.

130

Not blither is the mountain roe :  
With many a wanton stroke  
Her feet disperse the powdery snow,  
That rises up like smoke.

135

The storm came on before its time :  
She wander'd up and down ;  
And many a hill did Lucy climb :  
But never reach'd the town.

140

<sup>1</sup> A clock in a church-tower.

The wretched parents all that night  
Went shouting far and wide ;  
But there was neither sound nor sight  
To serve them for a guide.

At day-break on a hill they stood 145  
That overlook'd the moor ;  
And thence they saw the bridge of wood  
A furlong from their door.

They wept — and, turning homeward, cried  
“ In heaven we all shall meet ! ” 150  
— When in the snow the mother spied  
The print of Lucy's feet.

Then downwards from the steep hill's edge  
They track'd the footmarks small ;  
And through the broken hawthorn hedge, 155  
And by the long stone-wall :

And then an open field they cross'd :  
The marks were still the same ;  
They track'd them on, nor ever lost ;  
And to the bridge they came : 160

They follow'd from the snowy bank  
Those footmarks, one by one,  
Into the middle of the plank ;  
And further there were none !

— Yet some maintain that to this day      165  
 She is a living child ;  
 That you may see sweet Lucy Gray  
 Upon the lonesome wild.

O'er rough and smooth she trips along,  
 And never looks behind ;      170  
 And sings a solitary song  
 That whistles in the wind.

## VII

## TO A DISTANT FRIEND

Why art thou silent ? Is thy love a plant  
 Of such weak fibre that the treacherous air  
 Of absence withers what was once so fair ?      175  
 Is there no debt to pay, no boon to grant ?

Yet have my thoughts for thee been vigilant,  
 Bound to thy service with unceasing care —  
 The mind's least generous wish a mendicant  
 For nought but what thy happiness could spare.      180

Speak !—though this soft warm heart, once free to  
 hold

A thousand tender pleasures, thine and mine,  
 Be left more desolate, more dreary cold

'Than a forsaken bird's-nest fill'd with snow  
 'Mid its own bush of leafless eglantine —      185  
 Speak, that my torturing doubts their end may know !

## VIII

## DESIDERIA

Surprized by joy — impatient as the wind —  
I turn'd to share the transport — Oh ! with whom  
But Thee — deep buried in the silent tomb,  
That spot which no vicissitude can find ? 190

Love, faithful love recall'd thee to my mind—  
But how could I forget thee ? Through what power  
Even for the least division of an hour  
Have I been so beguiled as to be blind

To my most grievous loss ! — That thought's return  
Was the worst pang that sorrow ever bore 196  
Save one, one only, when I stood forlorn,

Knowing my heart's best treasure was no more ;  
That neither present time, nor years unborn  
Could to my sight that heavenly face restore. 200

## IX

## ODE TO DUTY

Stern Daughter of the Voice of God !  
O Duty ! if that name thou love  
Who art a light to guide, a rod  
To check the erring, and reprove ;  
Thou who art victory and law 205  
When empty terrors overawe ;



From vain temptations dost set free,  
And calm'st the weary strife of frail humanity!

There are who ask not if thine eye  
Be on them ; who, in love and truth 210  
Where no misgiving is, rely  
Upon the genial sense of youth :  
Glad hearts ! without reproach or blot,  
Who do thy work, and know it not :  
Oh ! if through confidence misplaced 215  
They fail, thy saving arms, dread Power ! around them  
cast.

Serene will be our days and bright  
And happy will our nature be  
When love is an unerring light,  
And joy its own security. 220  
And they a blissful course may hold  
Ev'n now, who, not unwisely bold,  
Live in the spirit of this creed :  
Yet seek thy firm support, according to their need.

I, loving freedom, and untried, 225  
No sport of every random gust,  
Yet being to myself a guide,  
Too blindly have reposed my trust :  
And oft, when in my heart was heard  
Thy timely mandate, I deferr'd 230  
The task, in smoother walks to stray ;  
But thee I now would serve more strictly, if I may.

Through no disturbance of my soul  
Or strong compunction in me wrought,  
I supplicate for thy control, 235  
But in the quietness of thought :  
Me this uncharter'd freedom tires ;  
I feel the weight of chance-desires :  
My hopes no more must change their name ;  
I long for a repose that ever is the same. 240

Stern Lawgiver ! yet thou dost wear  
The Godhead's most benignant grace ;  
Nor know we anything so fair  
As is the smile upon thy face :  
Flowers laugh before thee on their beds, 245  
And fragrance in thy footing treads ;  
Thou dost preserve the Stars from wrong ;  
And the most ancient Heavens, through Thee, are fresh  
and strong.

To humbler functions, awful Power !  
I call thee : I myself commend 250  
Unto thy guidance from this hour ;  
Oh let my weakness have an end !  
Give unto me, made lowly wise,  
The spirit of self-sacrifice ;  
The confidence of reason give ; 255  
And in the light of truth thy Bondman let me live.

## X

## ENGLAND AND SWITZERLAND, 1802

Two Voices are there ; one is of the Sea,  
One of the Mountains ; each a mighty voice :  
In both from age to age thou didst rejoice,  
They were thy chosen music, Liberty ! 260

There came a tyrant, and with holy glee  
Thou fought'st against him, — but hast vainly striven :  
Thou from thy Alpine holds at length art driven,  
Where not a torrent murmurs heard by thee.

— Of one deep bliss thine ear hath been bereft ; 265  
Then cleave, O cleave to that which still is left —  
For, high-soul'd Maid, what sorrow would it be  
That Mountain floods should thunder as before,  
And Ocean bellow from his rocky shore,  
And neither awful Voice be heard by Thee ! 270

## XI

## ON THE EXTINCTION OF THE VENETIAN REPUBLIC

Once did She hold the gorgeous East in fee  
And was the safeguard of the West ; the worth  
Of Venice did not fall below her birth,  
Venice, the eldest child of Liberty.

She was a maiden city, bright and free ; 275  
No guile seduced, no force could violate ;  
And when she took unto herself a mate,  
She must espouse the everlasting Sea.

And what if she had seen those glories fade,  
Those titles vanish, and that strength decay, — 280  
Yet shall some tribute of regret be paid

When her long life hath reach'd its final day :  
Men are we, and must grieve when even the shade  
Of that which once was great is pass'd away.

## XII

LONDON, 1802

O Friend ! I know not which way I must look 285  
For comfort, being, as I am, opprest  
To think that now our life is only drest  
For show ; mean handy-work of craftsman, cook,

Or groom ! — We must run glittering like a brook  
In the open sunshine, or' we are unblest ; 290  
The wealthiest man among us is the best :  
No grandeur now in nature or in book

Delights us. Rapine, avarice, expense,  
This is idolatry ; and these we adore :  
Plain living and high thinking are no more : 295

The homely beauty of the good old cause  
Is gone ; our peace, our fearful innocence,  
And pure religion breathing household laws.

## XIII

## THE SAME

Milton! thou shouldst be living at this hour:  
 England hath need of thee: she is a fen 300  
 Of stagnant waters: altar, sword, and pen,  
 Fireside, the heroic wealth of hall and bower,  
 Have forfeited their ancient English dower  
 Of inward happiness. We are selfish men:  
 Oh! raise us up, return to us again; 305  
 And give us manners, virtue, freedom, power.  
 Thy soul was like a Star, and dwelt apart:  
 Thou hadst a voice whose sound was like the sea,  
 Pure as the naked heavens, majestic, free;  
 So didst thou travel on life's common way 310  
 In cheerful godliness; and yet thy heart  
 The lowliest duties on herself did lay.

## XIV

When I have borne in memory what has tamed  
 Great nations; how ennobling thoughts depart  
 When men change swords for ledgers, and desert 315  
 The student's bower for gold,—some fears unnamed  
 I had, my Country!—am I to be blamed?  
 Now, when I think of thee, and what thou art,  
 Verily, in the bottom of my heart  
 Of those unfilial fears I am ashamed. 320



For dearly must we prize thee ; we who find  
In thee a bulwark for the cause of men ;  
And I by my affection was beguiled :

What wonder if a Poet now and then,  
Among the many movements of his mind, 325  
Felt for thee as a lover or a child !

## XV

## SIMON LEE THE OLD HUNTSMAN

In the sweet shire of Cardigan,  
Not far from pleasant Ivor Hall,  
An old man dwells, a little man, —  
'Tis said he once was tall. 330  
Full five-and-thirty years he lived  
A running huntsman merry ;  
And still the centre of his cheek  
Is red as a ripe cherry.

No man like him the horn could sound, 335  
And hill and valley rang with glee,  
When Echo bandied, round and round,  
The halloo of Simon Lee.  
In those proud days he little cared  
For husbandry or tillage ; 340  
To blither tasks did Simon rouse  
The sleepers of the village.

He all the country could outrun,  
Could leave both man and horse behind ;

And often, ere the chase was done 345  
He reel'd and was stone-blind.

And still there's something in the world  
At which his heart rejoices ;  
For when the chiming hounds are out,  
He dearly loves their voices. 350

But oh the heavy change ! — bereft  
Of health, strength, friends and kindred, see !  
Old Simon to the world is left  
In liveried poverty : —  
His master's dead, and no one now 355  
Dwells in the Hall of Ivor ;  
Men, dogs, and horses, all are dead ;  
He is the sole survivor.

And he is lean and he is sick,  
His body, dwindled and awry, 360  
Rests upon ankles swoln and thick ;  
His legs are thin and dry.  
One prop he has, and only one, —  
His wife, an aged woman,  
Lives with him, near the waterfall, 365  
Upon the village common.

Beside their moss-grown hut of clay,  
Not twenty paces from the door,  
A scrap of land they have, but they  
Are poorest of the poor. 370  
This scrap of land he from the heath  
Enclosed when he was stronger ;

But what to them avails the land  
Which he can till no longer?

Oft, working by her husband's side, 375  
Ruth does what Simon cannot do ;  
For she, with scanty cause for pride,  
Is stouter of the two.

And, though you with your utmost skill  
From labour could not wean them, 380  
'Tis little, very little, all  
That they can do between them.

Few months of life has he in store  
As he to you will tell,  
For still, the more he works, the more 385  
Do his weak ankles swell.

My gentle Reader, I perceive  
How patiently you've waited,  
And now I fear that you expect  
Some tale will be related. 390

O Reader ! had you in your mind  
Such stores as silent thought can bring,  
O gentle Reader ! you would find  
A tale in every thing.

What more I have to say is short, 395  
And you must kindly take it :  
It is no tale ; but, should you think,  
Perhaps a tale you'll make it.

One summer-day I chanced to see  
This old Man doing all he could 400

To unearth the root of an old tree.  
A stump of rotten wood.  
The mattock totter'd in his hand ;  
So vain was his endeavour  
That at the root of the old tree  
He might have work'd for ever. 405

' You're overtask'd, good Simon Lee,  
Give me your tool,' to him I said ;  
And at the word right gladly he  
Received my proffer'd aid. 410  
I struck, and with a single blow  
The tangled root I sever'd,  
At which the poor old man so long  
And vainly had endeavour'd.

The tears into his eyes were brought, 415  
And thanks and praises seem'd to run  
So fast out of his heart, I thought  
They never would have done.  
— I've heard of hearts unkind, kind deed  
With coldness still returning ; 420  
Alas ! the gratitude of men  
Hath oftener left me mourning.

## XVI

## A LESSON

There is a Flower, the lesser Celandine,  
That shrinks like many more from cold and rain,  
And the first moment that the sun may shine, 425  
Bright as the sun himself, 'tis out again !

When hailstones have been falling, swarm on swarm,  
Or blasts the green field and the trees distress,  
Oft have I seen it muffled up from harm  
In close self-shelter, like a thing at rest. 430

But lately, one rough day, this Flower I past,  
And recognized it, though an alter'd form,  
Now standing forth an offering to the blast,  
And buffeted at will by rain and storm.

I stopp'd and said, with inly-mutter'd voice, 435  
'It doth not love the shower, nor seek the cold;  
This neither is its courage nor its choice,  
But its necessity in being old.

'The sunshine may not cheer it, nor the dew;  
It cannot help itself in its decay; 440  
Stiff in its members, wither'd, changed of hue,' —  
And, in my spleen, I smiled that it was grey.

To be a prodigal's favourite — then, worse truth,  
A miser's pensioner — behold our lot!  
O Man! that from thy fair and shining youth 445  
Age might but take the things Youth needed not!

## XVII

## THE AFFLICTION OF MARGARET

Where art thou, my beloved Son,  
Where art thou, worse to me than dead?  
Oh find me, prosperous or undone!  
Or if the grave be now thy bed, 450



Why am I ignorant of the same  
That I may rest ; and neither blame  
Nor sorrow may attend thy name ?

Seven years, alas ! to have received  
No tidings of an only child — 455  
To have despair'd, have hoped, believed,  
And been for ever more beguiled, —  
Sometimes with thoughts of very bliss !  
I catch at them, and then I miss ;  
Was ever darkness like to this ? 460

He was among the prime in worth,  
An object beauteous to behold ;  
Well born, well bred ; I sent him forth  
Ingenuous, innocent, and bold :  
If things ensued that wanted grace 465  
As hath been said, they were not base ;  
And never blush was on my face.

Ah ! little doth the young-one dream  
When full of play and childish cares,  
What power is in his wildest scream 470  
Heard by his mother unawares !  
He knows it not, he cannot guess ;  
Years to a mother bring distress ;  
But do not make her love the less.

Neglect me ! no, I suffer'd long 475  
From that ill thought ; and being blind  
Said ' Pride shall help me in my wrong :  
Kind mother have I been, as kind

As ever breathed : ' and that is true ;  
I've wet my path with tears like dew, 480  
Weeping for him when no one knew.

My Son, if thou be humbled, poor,  
Hopeless of honour and of gain,  
Oh ! do not dread thy mother's door ;  
Think not of me with grief and pain : 485  
I now can see with better eyes ;  
And worldly grandeur I despise  
And fortune with her gifts and lies.

Alas ! the fowls of heaven have wings,  
And blasts of heaven will aid their flight ; 490  
They mount — how short a voyage brings  
The wanderers back to their delight !  
Chains tie us down by land and sea ;  
And wishes, vain as mine, may be  
All that is left to comfort thee. 495

Perhaps some dungeon hears thee groan  
Maim'd, mangled by inhuman men ;  
Or thou upon a desert thrown  
Inheritest the lion's den ;  
Or hast been summon'd to the deep 500  
Thou, thou, and all thy mates to keep  
An incommunicable<sup>1</sup> sleep.

I look for ghosts : but none will force  
Their way to me ; 'tis falsely said  
That there was ever intercourse 505

<sup>1</sup> Beyond the reach of human intercourse.

Between the living and the dead ;  
 For surely then I should have sight  
 Of him I wait for day and night  
 With love and longings infinite.

My apprehensions come in crowds ; 510  
 I dread the rustling of the grass ;  
 The very shadows of the clouds  
 Have power to shake me as they pass :  
 I question things, and do not find  
 One that will answer to my mind ; 515  
 And all the world appears unkind.

Beyond participation lie  
 My troubles, and beyond relief :  
 If any chance to heave a sigh  
 They pity me, and not my grief. 520  
 Then come to me, my Son, or send  
 Some tidings that my woes may end !  
 I have no other earthly friend.

## XVIII

### TO THE SKYLARK

Ethereal minstrel ! pilgrim of the sky !  
 Dost thou despise the earth where cares abound ? 525  
 Or while the wings aspire, are heart and eye  
 Both with thy nest upon the dewy ground ?  
 Thy nest which thou canst drop into at will,  
 Those quivering wings composed, that music still !

To the last point of vision, and beyond 530  
Mount, daring warbler ! — that love-prompted strain  
— 'Twixt thee and thine a never-failing bond —  
Thrills not the less the bosom of the plain :  
Yet might'st thou seem, proud privilege ! to sing  
All independent of the leafy Spring. 535

Leave to the nightingale her shady wood ;  
A privacy of glorious light is thine,  
Whence thou dost pour upon the world a flood  
Of harmony, with instinct more divine ;  
Type of the wise, who soar, but never roam — 540  
True to the kindred points of Heaven and Home.

## XIX

## THE GREEN LINNET

Beneath these fruit-tree boughs that shed  
Their snow-white blossoms on my head,  
With brightest sunshine round me spread  
Of Spring's unclouded weather, 545  
In this sequester'd nook how sweet  
To sit upon my orchard-seat !  
And flowers and birds once more to greet,  
My last year's friends together.

One have I mark'd, the happiest guest 550  
In all this covert of the blest :  
Hail to Thee, far above the rest  
In joy of voice and pinion !

Thou, Linnet ! in thy green array  
Presiding Spirit here to-day 555  
Dost lead the revels of the May ;  
And this is thy dominion.

While birds, and butterflies, and flowers, ,  
Make all one band of paramours,  
Thou, ranging up and down the bowers, 560  
Art sole in thy employment ;  
A Life, a Presence like the air,  
Scattering thy gladness without care,  
Too blest with any one to pair ;  
Thyself thy own enjoyment. 565

Amid yon tuft of hazel trees  
That twinkle to the gusty breeze,  
Behold him perch'd in ecstasies  
Yet seeming still to hover ;  
There ! where the flutter of his wings 570  
Upon his back and body flings  
Shadows and sunny glimmerings,  
That cover him all over.

My dazzled sight he oft deceives —  
A brother of the dancing leaves ; 575  
Then flits, and from the cottage-eaves  
Pours forth his song in gushes ;  
As if by that exulting strain  
He mock'd and treated with disdain  
The voiceless Form he chose to feign, 580  
While fluttering in the bushes.



## XX

## TO THE CUCKOO

O blithe new-comer ! I have heard,  
I hear thee and rejoice :  
O Cuckoo ! shall I call thee Bird,  
Or but a wandering Voice ? 585

While I am lying on the grass  
Thy twofold shout I hear ;  
From hill to hill it seems to pass,  
At once far off and near.

Though babbling only to the vale 590  
Of sunshine and of flowers,  
Thou bringest unto me a tale  
Of visionary hours.

Thrice welcome, darling of the Spring !  
Even yet thou art to me 595  
No bird, but an invisible thing,  
A voice, a mystery ;

The same whom in my school-boy days  
I listen'd to ; that Cry  
Which made me look a thousand ways 600  
In bush, and tree, and sky.

To seek thee did I often rove  
Through woods and on the green ;  
And thou wert still a hope, a love ;  
Still long'd for, never seen ! 605

And I can listen to thee yet;  
 Can lie upon the plain  
 And listen, till I do beget  
 That golden time again.

O blesséd Bird! the earth we pace 610  
 Again appears to be  
 An unsubstantial, faery place,  
 That is fit home for Thee!

## XXI

UPON WESTMINSTER BRIDGE, SEPT. 3, 1802

Earth has not anything to show more fair:  
 Dull would he be of soul who could pass by 615  
 A sight so touching in its majesty:  
 This City now doth like a garment wear

The beauty of the morning: silent, bare,  
 Ships, towers, domes, theatres, and temples lie  
 Open unto the fields, and to the sky, — 620  
 All bright and glittering in the smokeless air.

Never did sun more beautifully steep  
 In his first splendour valley, rock, or hill;  
 Ne'er saw I, never felt, a calm so deep!

The river glideth at its own sweet will: 625  
 Dear God! the very houses seem asleep;  
 And all that mighty heart is lying still!

XXII

COMPOSED AT NEIDPATH CASTLE, THE PROPERTY OF  
LORD QUEENSBERRY, 1803

Degenerate Douglas ! oh, the unworthy lord !  
Whom mere despite of heart could so far please  
And love of havoc, (for with such disease 630  
Fame taxes him,) that he could send forth word

To level with the dust a noble horde,  
A brotherhood of venerable trees,  
Leaving an ancient dome, and towers like these,  
Beggar'd and outraged ! — Many hearts deplored 635

The fate of those old trees ; and oft with pain  
The traveller at this day will stop and gaze  
On wrongs, which Nature scarcely seems to heed :

For shelter'd places, bosoms, nooks, and bays,  
And the pure mountains, and the gentle Tweed, 640  
And the green silent pastures, yet remain.

XXIII

ADMONITION TO A TRAVELLER

Yes, there is holy pleasure in thine eye !  
— The lovely Cottage in the guardian nook  
Hath stirr'd thee deeply ; with its own dear brook,  
Its own small pasture, almost its own sky ! 645

But covet not the abode ; forbear to sigh  
 As many do, repining while they look ;  
 Intruders — who would tear from Nature's book  
 This precious leaf with harsh impiety.

— Think what the home must be if it were thine, 650  
 Even thine, though few thy wants ! — Roof, window,  
 door,

The very flowers are sacred to the Poor,

The roses to the porch which they entwine :  
 Yea, all that now enchants thee, from the day  
 On which it should be touch'd, would melt away ! 655

## XXIV

## TO THE HIGHLAND GIRL OF INVERSNEYDE

Sweet Highland Girl, a very shower  
 Of beauty is thy earthly dower !  
 Twice seven consenting years have shed  
 Their utmost bounty on thy head :  
 And these gray rocks, that household lawn, 660  
 Those trees — a veil just half withdrawn,  
 This fall of water that doth make  
 A murmur near the silent lake,  
 This little bay, a quiet road  
 That holds in shelter thy abode ; 665  
 In truth together ye do seem  
 Like something fashion'd in a dream ;  
 Such forms as from their covert peep  
 When earthly cares are laid asleep !

But O fair Creature! in the light 670  
 Of common day, so heavenly bright,  
 I bless Thee, Vision as thou art,  
 I bless thee with a human heart :  
 God shield thee to thy latest years!  
 Thee neither know I nor thy peers : 675  
 And yet my eyes are fill'd with tears.

With earnest feeling I shall pray  
 For thee when I am far away ;  
 For never saw I mien or face  
 In which more plainly I could trace 680  
 Benignity and home-bred sense  
 Ripening in perfect innocence.  
 Here scatter'd, like a random seed,  
 Remote from men, Thou dost not need  
 The embarrass'd look of shy distress, 685  
 And maidenly shamefacedness :  
 'Thou wear'st upon thy forehead clear  
 The freedom of a Mountaineer :  
 A face with gladness overspread ;  
 Soft smiles, by human kindness bred ; 690  
 And seemliness complete, that sways  
 Thy courtesies, about thee plays ;  
 With no restraint, but such as springs  
 From quick and eager visitings  
 Of thoughts that lie beyond the reach 695  
 Of thy few words of English speech :  
 A bondage sweetly brook'd, a strife  
 That gives thy gestures grace and life !



So have I, not unmoved in mind,  
Seen birds of tempest-loving kind — 700  
Thus beating up against the wind.

What hand but would a garland cull  
For thee who art so beautiful?  
O happy pleasure ! here to dwell  
Beside thee in some heathy dell ; 705  
Adopt your homely ways, and dress,  
A shepherd, thou a shepherdess !  
But I could frame a wish for thee  
More like a grave reality :  
Thou art to me but as a wave 710  
Of the wild sea : and I would have  
Some claim upon thee, if I could,  
Though but of common neighbourhood.  
What joy to hear thee, and to see !  
Thy elder brother I would be, 715  
Thy father — anything to thee.

Now thanks to Heaven ! that of its grace  
Hath led me to this lonely place :  
Joy have I had ; and going hence  
I bear away my recompense. 720  
In spots like these it is we prize  
Our Memory, feel that she hath eyes :  
Then why should I be loth to stir ?  
I feel this place was made for her ;  
To give new pleasure like the past, 725  
Continued long as life shall last.

Nor am I loth, though pleased at heart,  
Sweet Highland Girl ! from thee to part ;  
For I, methinks, till I grow old  
As fair before me shall behold 730  
As I do now, the cabin small,  
The lake, the bay, the waterfall ;  
And Thee, the Spirit of them all !

## XXV

## THE REAPER

Behold her, single in the field,  
Yon solitary Highland Lass ! 735  
Reaping and singing by herself ;  
Stop here, or gently pass !  
Alone she cuts and binds the grain,  
And sings a melancholy strain ;  
O listen ! for the vale profound 740  
Is overflowing with the sound.

No nightingale did ever chaunt  
More welcome notes to weary bands  
Of travellers in some shady haunt,  
Among Arabian sands ; 745  
A voice so thrilling ne'er was heard  
In spring-time from the cuckoo-bird,  
Breaking the silence of the seas  
Among the farthest Hebrides.

Will no one tell me what she sings ? 750  
 Perhaps the plaintive numbers flow  
 For old, unhappy, far-off things,  
 And battles long ago :  
 Or is it some more humble lay,  
 Familiar matter of to-day ? 755  
 Some natural sorrow, loss, or pain,  
 That has been, and may be again !

Whate'er the theme, the maiden sang  
 As if her song could have no ending ;  
 I saw her singing at her work, 760  
 And o'er the sickle bending ; —  
 I listen'd, motionless and still ;  
 And, as I mounted up the hill,  
 The music in my heart I bore  
 Long after it was heard no more. 765

## XXVI

## THE REVERIE OF POOR SUSAN

At the corner of Wood Street when daylight appears,  
 Hangs a Thrush that sings loud, it has sung for three  
 years :

Poor Susan has pass'd by the spot, and has heard  
 In the silence of morning the song of the bird.

'Tis a note of enchantment ; what ails her ? She sees 770  
 A mountain ascending, a vision of trees ;  
 Bright volumes of vapour through Lothbury glide,  
 And a river flows on through the vale of Cheapside.

Green pastures she views in the midst of the dale  
Down which she so often has tripp'd with her pail ; 775  
And a single small cottage, a nest like a dove's,  
The one only dwelling on earth that she loves.

She looks, and her heart is in heaven : but they fade,  
The mist and the river, the hill and the shade ;  
The stream will not flow, and the hill will not rise, 780  
And the colours have all pass'd away from her eyes !

## XXVII

## THE DAFFODILS

I wander'd lonely as a cloud  
That floats on high o'er vales and hills,  
When all at once I saw a crowd,  
A host of golden daffodils, 785  
Beside the lake, beneath the trees,  
Fluttering and dancing in the breeze.

Continuous as the stars that shine  
And twinkle on the milky way,  
They stretch'd in never-ending line 790  
Along the margin of a bay ;  
Ten thousand saw I at a glance  
Tossing their heads in sprightly dance.

The waves beside them danced, but they  
Out-did the sparkling waves in glee : — 795  
A Poet could not but be gay  
In such a jocund company !

I gazed — and gazed — but little thought  
What wealth the show to me had brought ;

For oft, when on my couch I lie 800  
In vacant or in pensive mood,  
They flash upon that inward eye  
Which is the bliss of solitude ;  
And then my heart with pleasure fills,  
And dances with the daffodils. 805

## XXVIII

## TO THE DAISY

With little here to do or see  
Of things that in the great world be,  
Sweet Daisy ! oft I talk to thee  
For thou art worthy,  
Thou unassuming Common-place 810  
Of Nature, with that homely face,  
And yet with something of a grace  
Which Love makes for thee !

Oft on the dappled turf at ease  
I sit and play with similes, 815  
Loose types of things through all degrees,  
Thoughts of thy raising ;  
And many a fond and idle name  
I give to thee, for praise or blame  
As is the humour of the game, 820  
While I am gazing.



A nun demure, of lowly port ;  
Or sprightly maiden, of Love's court,  
In thy simplicity the sport

Of all temptations ; 825

A queen in crown of rubies drest ;  
A starveling in a scanty vest ;  
Are all, as seems to suit thee best,  
Thy appellations.

A little Cyclops, with one eye 830

Staring to threaten and defy,  
That thought comes next — and instantly  
The freak is over,

The shape will vanish, and behold !  
A silver shield with boss<sup>1</sup> of gold 835  
That spreads itself, some faery bold  
In fight to cover.

I see thee glittering from afar —  
And then thou art a pretty star,  
Not quite so fair as many are 840

In heaven above thee !  
Yet like a star, with glittering crest,  
Self-poised in air thou seem'st to rest ; —  
May peace come never to his nest  
Who shall reprove thee ! 845

Sweet Flower ! for by that name at last  
When all my reveries are past  
I call thee, and to that cleave fast,  
Sweet silent Creature !

<sup>1</sup> Knob, or circular ornament.

That breath'st with me in sun and air, 850  
Do thou, as thou art wont, repair  
My heart with gladness, and a share  
Of thy meek nature !

## XXIX

## YARROW UNVISITED

1803

From Stirling Castle we had seen  
The mazy Forth unravell'd, 855  
Had trod the banks of Clyde and Tay  
And with the Tweed had travell'd ;  
And when we came to Clovenford,  
Then said my ' winsome Marrow,'<sup>1</sup>  
' Whate'er betide, we'll turn aside, 860  
And see the Braes of Yarrow.'

' Let Yarrow folk, frae Selkirk town,  
Who have been buying, selling,  
Go back to Yarrow, 'tis their own,  
Each maiden to her dwelling ! 865  
On Yarrow's banks let herons feed,  
Hares couch, and rabbits burrow ;  
But we will downward with the Tweed,  
Nor turn aside to Yarrow.

<sup>1</sup> Mate.

‘ There’s Gala Water, Leader Haughs, 870  
Both lying right before us ;  
And Dryburgh, where with chiming Tweed  
The lintwhites sing in chorus ;  
There’s pleasant Tiviot-dale, a land  
Made blithe with plough and harrow : 875  
Why throw away a needful day  
To go in search of Yarrow ?

‘What’s Yarrow but a river bare  
That glides the dark hills under?  
There are a thousand such elsewhere 880  
As worthy of your wonder.’  
— Strange words they seem’d of slight and scorn;  
My True-love sigh’d for sorrow,  
And look’d me in the face, to think  
I thus could speak of Yarrow! 885

‘ O green,’ said I, ‘ are Yarrow’s holms,  
And sweet is Yarrow flowing !  
Fair hangs the apple frae the rock,  
But we will leave it growing.  
O’er hilly path and open strath  
We’ll wander Scotland thorough ;  
But, though so near, we will not turn  
Into the dale of Yarrow.

‘Let beeves and home-bred kine partake  
The sweets of Burn-mill meadow ;  
The swan on still Saint Mary’s Lake  
Float double, swan and shadow !

We will not see them ; will not go  
 To-day, nor yet to-morrow ;  
 Enough if in our hearts we know 900  
 There's such a place as Yarrow.

' Be Yarrow stream unseen, unknown !  
 It must, or we shall rue it :  
 We have a vision of our own,  
 Ah ! why should we undo it ? 905  
 The treasured dreams of times long past,  
 We'll keep them, winsome Marrow !  
 For when we're there, although 'tis fair,  
 'Twill be another Yarrow !

' If Care with freezing years should come 910  
 And wandering seem but folly, —  
 Should we be loth to stir from home,  
 And yet be melancholy ;  
 Should life be dull, and spirits low,  
 'Twill soothe us in our sorrow 915  
 That earth has something yet to show,  
 The bonny holms of Yarrow ! '

## XXX

## YARROW VISITED

*September, 1814*

And is this — Yarrow ? — This the stream  
 Of which my fancy cherish'd

So faithfully, a waking dream, 920  
An image that hath perish'd?  
O that some minstrel's harp were near  
To utter notes of gladness  
And chase this silence from the air,  
That fills my heart with sadness ! 925

Yet why? — a silvery current flows  
With uncontroll'd meanderings ;  
Nor have these eyes by greener hills  
Been soothed, in all my wanderings.  
And, through her depths, Saint Mary's Lake 930  
Is visibly delighted ;  
For not a feature of those hills  
Is in the mirror slighted.

A blue sky bends o'er Yarrow Vale  
Save where that pearly whiteness 935  
Is round the rising sun diffused,  
A tender hazy brightness ;  
Mild dawn of promise ! that excludes  
All profitless dejection ;  
Though not unwilling here to admit 940  
A pensive recollection.

Where was it that the famous Flower  
Of Yarrow Vale lay bleeding?  
His bed perchance was yon smooth mound  
On which the herd is feeding : 945  
And haply from this crystal pool,  
Now peaceful as the morning,



The Water-wraith<sup>1</sup> ascended thrice,  
And gave his doleful warning.

Delicious is the lay that sings 950  
The haunts of happy lovers,  
The path that leads them to the grove,  
The leafy grove that covers :  
And pity sanctifies the verse  
That paints, by strength of sorrow, 955  
The unconquerable strength of love ;  
Bear witness, rueful Yarrow !

But thou that didst appear so fair  
To fond imagination,  
Dost rival in the light of day 960  
Her delicate creation :  
Meek loveliness is round thee spread,  
A softness still and holy :  
The grace of forest charms decay'd,  
And pastoral melancholy. 965

That region left, the vale unfolds  
Rich groves of lofty stature,  
With Yarrow winding through the pomp  
Of cultivated nature ;  
And rising from those lofty groves 970  
Behold a ruin hoary,  
The shatter'd front of Newark's towers,  
Renown'd in Border story.

<sup>1</sup> Water-spirit.

Fair scenes for childhood's opening bloom,  
For sportive youth to stray in, 975  
For manhood to enjoy his strength,  
And age to wear away in !  
Yon cottage seems a bower of bliss,  
A covert for protection  
Of tender thoughts that nestle there 980  
The brood of chaste affection.

How sweet on this autumnal day  
The wild-wood fruits to gather,  
And on my True-love's forehead plant  
A crest of blooming heather ! 985  
And what if I enwreathed my own ?  
'Twere no offence to reason ;  
The sober hills thus deck their brows  
To meet the wintry season.

I see — but not by sight alone, 990  
Loved Yarrow, have I won thee ;  
A ray of Fancy still survives —  
Her sunshine plays upon thee !  
Thy ever-youthful waters keep  
A course of lively pleasure ; 995  
And gladsome notes my lips can breathe  
Accordant to the measure.

The vapours linger round the heights,  
They melt, and soon must vanish ;  
One hour is theirs, nor more is mine — 1000  
Sad thought ! which I would banish,

But that I know, where'er I go,  
 Thy genuine image, Yarrow!  
 Will dwell with me, to heighten joy,  
 And cheer my mind in sorrow. 1005

## XXXI

## BY THE SEA

It is a beauteous evening, calm and free;  
 The holy time is quiet as a Nun  
 Breathless with adoration; the broad sun  
 Is sinking down in its tranquillity;  
 The gentleness of heaven is on the Sea: 1010  
 Listen! the mighty Being is awake,  
 And doth with his eternal motion make  
 A sound like thunder — everlastingly.  
 Dear child! dear girl! that walkest with me here,  
 If thou appear untouch'd by solemn thought 1015  
 Thy nature is not therefore less divine:  
 Thou liest in Abraham's bosom all the year,  
 And worshipp'st at the Temple's inner shrine,  
 God being with thee when we know it not.

## XXXII

## TO SLEEP

A flock of sheep that leisurely pass by 1020  
 One after one; the sound of rain, and bees  
 Murmuring; the fall of rivers, winds and seas,  
 Smooth fields, white sheets of water, and pure sky;

I've thought of all by turns, and yet do lie  
Sleepless; and soon the small birds' melodies 1025  
Must hear, first utter'd from my orchard trees,  
And the first cuckoo's melancholy cry.

Even thus last night, and two nights more I lay,  
And could not win thee, Sleep! by any stealth:  
So do not let me wear to-night away: 1030

Without Thee what is all the morning's wealth?  
Come, blesséd barrier between day and day,  
Dear mother of fresh thoughts and joyous health!

## XXXIII

## THE INNER VISION

Most sweet it is with unuplifted eyes  
To pace the ground, if path be there or none, 1035  
While a fair region round the traveller lies  
Which he forbears again to look upon;

Pleased rather with some soft ideal scene,  
The work of Fancy, or some happy tone  
Of meditation, slipping in between 1040  
The beauty coming and the beauty gone.

— If Thought and Love desert us, from that day  
Let us break off all commerce with the Muse:  
With Thought and Love companions of our way —

Whate'er the senses take or may refuse, — 1045  
The Mind's internal heaven shall shed her dews  
Of inspiration on the humblest lay.

## XXXIV

## WRITTEN IN EARLY SPRING

I heard a thousand blended notes  
While in a grove I sate reclined,  
In that sweet mood when pleasant thoughts 1050  
Bring sad thoughts to the mind.

To her fair works did Nature link  
The human soul that through me ran ;  
And much it grieved my heart to think  
What Man has made of Man. 1055

Through primrose tufts, in that sweet bower,  
The periwinkle trail'd its wreaths ;  
And 'tis my faith that every flower  
Enjoys the air it breathes.

The birds around me hopp'd and play'd, 1060  
Their thoughts I cannot measure, —  
But the least motion which they made  
It seem'd a thrill of pleasure.

The budding twigs spread out their fan  
To catch the breezy air ; 1065  
And I must think, do all I can,  
That there was pleasure there.

If this belief from heaven be sent,  
If such be Nature's holy plan,  
Have I not reason to lament 1070  
What Man has made of Man ?



## XXXV

## RUTH : OR THE INFLUENCES OF NATURE

When Ruth was left half desolate  
Her father took another mate ;  
And Ruth, not seven years old,  
A slighted child, at her own will 1075  
Went wandering over dale and hill,  
In thoughtless freedom, bold.

And she had made a pipe of straw,  
And music from that pipe could draw  
Like sounds of winds and floods ; 1080  
Had built a bower upon the green,  
As if she from her birth had been  
An infant of the woods.

Beneath her father's roof, alone  
She seem'd to live ; her thoughts her own ; 1085  
Herself her own delight :  
Pleased with herself, nor sad nor gay ;  
And passing thus the live-long day,  
She grew to woman's height.

There came a youth from Georgia's shore — 1090  
A military casque <sup>2</sup> he wore  
With splendid feathers drest ;  
He brought them from the Cherokees ;  
The feathers nodded in the breeze  
And made a gallant crest. 1095

<sup>1</sup> Helmet.

From Indian blood you deem him sprung :  
But no ! he spake the English tongue  
And bore a soldier's name ;  
And, when America was free  
From battle and from jeopardy,  
He 'cross the ocean came.

1100

With hues of genius on his cheek,  
In finest tones the youth could speak :  
— While he was yet a boy  
The moon, the glory of the sun,  
And streams that murmur as they run  
Had been his dearest joy.

1105

He was a lovely youth ! I guess  
The panther in the wilderness  
Was not so fair as he ;  
And when he chose to sport and play,  
No dolphin ever was so gay  
Upon the tropic sea.

1110

Among the Indians he had fought ;  
And with him many tales he brought  
Of pleasure and of fear ;  
Such tales as, told to any maid  
By such a youth, in the green shade,  
Were perilous to hear.

1115

He told of girls, a happy rout !  
Who quit their fold with dance and shout,  
Their pleasant Indian town,

1120

To gather strawberries all day long ;  
Returning with a choral song  
When daylight is gone down. 1125

He spake of plants that hourly change  
Their blossoms, through a boundless range  
Of intermingling hues ;  
With budding, fading, faded flowers,  
They stand the wonder of the bowers 1130  
From morn to evening dew.

He told of the magnolia, spread  
High as a cloud, high over head !  
The cypress and her spire ;  
— Of flowers that with one scarlet gleam 1135  
Cover a hundred leagues, and seem  
To set the hills on fire.

The youth of green savannahs spake,  
And many an endless, endless lake  
With all its fairy crowds 1140  
Of islands, that together lie  
As quietly as spots of sky  
Among the evening clouds.

‘ How pleasant,’ then he said, ‘ it were  
A fisher or a hunter there, 1145  
In sunshine or in shade  
To wander with an easy mind,  
And build a household fire, and find  
A home in every glade !

‘What days and what bright years ! Ah me !  
Our life were life indeed, with thee 1151  
So pass’d in quiet bliss ;  
And all the while,’ said he, ‘to know  
That we were in a world of woe,  
On such an earth as this !’ 1155

And then he sometimes interwove  
Fond thoughts about a father’s love,  
‘For there,’ said he, ‘are spun  
Around the heart such tender ties,  
That our own children to our eyes 1160  
Are dearer than the sun.

‘Sweet Ruth ! and could you go with me  
My helpmate in the woods to be,  
Our shed at night to rear ;  
Or run, my own adopted bride, 1165  
A sylvan huntress at my side,  
And drive the flying deer !

‘Beloved Ruth !’ — No more he said.  
The wakeful Ruth at midnight shed  
A solitary tear : 1170  
She thought again — and did agree  
With him to sail across the sea,  
And drive the flying deer.

‘And now, as fitting is and right,  
We in the church our faith will plight, 1175  
A husband and a wife.’

Even so they did ; and I may say  
That to sweet Ruth that happy day  
Was more than human life.

Through dream and vision did she sink, 1180  
Delighted all the while to think  
That, on those lonesome floods  
And green savannahs, she should share  
His board with lawful joy, and bear  
His name in the wild woods. 1185

But, as you have before been told,  
This Stripling, sportive, gay, and bold,  
And with his dancing crest  
So beautiful, through savage lands  
Had roam'd about, with vagrant bands 1190  
Of Indians in the West.

The wind, the tempest roaring high,  
The tumult of a tropic sky  
Might well be dangerous food  
For him, a youth to whom was given 1195  
So much of earth — so much of heaven,  
And such impetuous blood.

Whatever in those climes he found  
Irregular in sight or sound  
Did to his mind impart 1200  
A kindred impulse, seem'd allied  
To his own powers, and justified  
The workings of his heart.



Nor less, to feed voluptuous thought,  
The beauteous forms of Nature wrought, — 1205  
Fair trees and gorgeous flowers ;  
The breezes their own languor lent ;  
The stars had feelings, which they sent  
Into those favour'd bowers.

Yet, in his worst pursuits, I ween 1210  
That sometimes there did intervene  
Pure hopes of high intent :  
For passions link'd to forms so fair  
And stately, needs must have their share  
Of noble sentiment. 1215

But ill he lived, much evil saw,  
With men to whom no better law  
Nor better life was known ;  
Deliberately and undeceived  
Those wild men's vices he received, 1220  
And gave them back his own.

His genius and his moral frame  
Were thus impair'd, and he became  
The slave of low desires :  
A man who without self-control 1225  
Would seek what the degraded soul  
Unworthily admires.

And yet he with no feign'd delight  
Had woo'd the maiden, day and night  
Had loved her, night and morn : 1230

What could he less than love, a maid  
Whose heart with so much nature play'd —  
So kind and so forlorn ?

Sometimes most earnestly he said,  
' O Ruth ! I have been worse than dead ; 1235  
False thoughts, thoughts bold and vain  
Encompass'd me on every side  
When I, in confidence and pride,  
Had cross'd the Atlantic main.

' Before me shone a glorious world 1240  
Fresh as a banner bright, unfurl'd  
To music suddenly :  
I look'd upon those hills and plains,  
And seem'd as if let loose from chains  
To live at liberty ! 1245

' No more of this — for now, by thee,  
Dear Ruth ! more happily set free,  
With nobler zeal I burn ;  
My soul from darkness is released  
Like the whole sky when to the east 1250  
The morning doth return.'

Full soon that better mind was gone ;  
No hope, no wish remain'd, not one, —  
They stirr'd him now no more ;  
New objects did new pleasure give, 1255  
And once again he wish'd to live  
As lawless as before.

Meanwhile, as thus with him it fared,  
They for the voyage were prepared,  
And went to the sea-shore :  
But, when they thither came, the youth  
Deserted his poor bride, and Ruth  
Could never find him more.

1260

God help thee, Ruth ! — Such pains she had  
That she in half a year was mad  
And in a prison housed ;  
And there, with many a doleful song  
Made of wild words, her cup of wrong  
She fearfully caroused.

1265

Yet sometimes milder hours she knew,  
Nor wanted sun, nor rain, nor dew,  
Nor pastimes of the May,  
— They all were with her in her cell ;  
And a clear brook with cheerful knell  
Did o'er the pebbles play.

1270

1275

When Ruth three seasons thus had lain,  
There came a respite to her pain ;  
She from her prison fled ;  
But of the Vagrant none took thought ;  
And where it liked her best she sought  
Her shelter and her bread.

1280

Among the fields she breathed again :  
The master-current of her brain  
Ran permanent and free ;

And, coming to the banks of Tone, 1285  
There did she rest ; and dwell alone  
Under the greenwood tree.

The engines of her pain, the tools  
That shaped her sorrow, rocks and pools,  
And airs that gently stir 1290  
The vernal leaves — she loved them still,  
Nor ever tax'd them with the ill  
Which had been done to her.

A barn her Winter bed supplies ;  
But, till the warmth of Summer skies 1295  
And Summer days is gone,  
(And all do in this tale agree)  
She sleeps beneath the greenwood tree,  
And other home has none.

An innocent life, yet far astray ! 1300  
And Ruth will, long before her day,  
Be broken down and old.  
Sore aches she needs must have ! but less  
Of mind, than body's wretchedness,  
From damp, and rain, and cold. 1305

If she is prest by want of food  
She from her dwelling in the wood  
Repairs to a road-side ;  
And there she begs at one steep place,  
Where up and down with easy pace 1310  
The horsemen-travellers ride.

That oaten pipe of hers is mute  
 Or thrown away : but with a flute  
 Her loneliness she cheers ;  
 This flute, made of a hemlock stalk, 1315  
 At evening in his homeward walk  
 The Quantock woodman hears.

I, too, have pass'd her on the hills  
 Setting her little water-mills  
 By spouts and fountains wild — 1320  
 Such small machinery as she turn'd  
 Ere she had wept, ere she had mourn'd, —  
 A young and happy child !

Farewell ! and when thy days are told,  
 Ill-fated Ruth ! in hallow'd mould 1325  
 Thy corpse shall buried be ;  
 For thee a funeral bell shall ring,  
 And all the congregation sing  
 A Christian psalm for thee.

## XXXVI

## NATURE AND THE POET

*Suggested by a Picture of Peele Castle in a Storm, painted  
 by Sir George Beaumont*

I was thy neighbour once, thou rugged Pile ! 1330  
 Four summer weeks I dwelt in sight of thee :  
 I saw thee every day ; and all the while  
 Thy Form was sleeping on a glassy sea.



So pure the sky, so quiet was the air !  
So like, so very like, was day to day ! 1335  
Whene'er I look'd, thy image still was there ;  
It trembled, but it never pass'd away.

How perfect was the calm ! It seem'd no sleep,  
No mood, which season takes away, or brings :  
I could have fancied that the mighty Deep 1340  
Was even the gentlest of all gentle things.

Ah ! then — if mine had been the painter's hand  
To express what then I saw ; and add the gleam,  
The light that never was on sea or land,  
The consecration, and the Poet's dream, — 1345

I would have planted thee, thou hoary pile,  
Amid a world how different from this !  
Beside a sea that could not cease to smile ;  
On tranquil land, beneath a sky of bliss.

Thou shouldst have seem'd a treasure-house divine  
Of peaceful years ; a chronicle of heaven ; — 1351  
Of all the sunbeams that did ever shine  
The very sweetest had to thee been given.

A picture had it been of lasting ease,  
Elysian quiet, without toil or strife ; 1355  
No motion but the moving tide ; a breeze ;  
Or merely silent Nature's breathing life.

Such, in the fond illusion of my heart,  
Such picture would I at that time have made ;

And seen the soul of truth in every part, 1360  
A steadfast peace that might not be betray'd.

So once it would have been, — 'tis so no more ;  
I have submitted to a new control :  
A power is gone, which nothing can restore ;  
A deep distress hath humanized my soul. 1365

Not for a moment could I now behold  
A smiling sea, and be what I have been :  
The feeling of my loss will ne'er be old ;  
This, which I know, I speak with mind serene.

Then, Beaumont, Friend ! who would have been the  
friend 1370

If he had lived, of Him whom I deplore,  
This work of thine I blame not, but commend ;  
This sea in anger, and that dismal shore.

O 'tis a passionate work ! — yet wise and well,  
Well chosen is the spirit that is here ; 1375  
That hulk which labours in the deadly swell,  
This rueful sky, this pageantry of fear !

And this huge Castle, standing here sublime,  
I love to see the look with which it braves,  
— Cased in the unfeeling armour of old time — 1380  
The lightning, the fierce wind, and trampling waves.

— Farewell, farewell the heart that lives alone,  
Housed in a dream, at distance from the Kind !<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Mankind.

Such happiness, wherever it be known,  
Is to be pitied ; for 'tis surely blind. 1385

But welcome fortitude, and patient cheer,  
And frequent sights of what is to be borne !  
Such sights, or worse, as are before me here : —  
Not without hope we suffer and we mourn.

## XXXVII

## GLEN-ALMAIN, THE NARROW GLEN

In this still place, remote from men, 1390

Sleeps Ossian, in the Narrow Glen ;

In this still place, where murmurs on

But one meek streamlet, only one :

He sang of battles, and the breath

Of stormy war, and violent death ; 1395

And should, methinks, when all was past,

Have rightfully been laid at last

Where rocks were rudely heap'd, and rent

As by a spirit turbulent ;

Where sights were rough, and sounds were wild,

And everything unreconciled ; 1401

In some complaining, dim retreat,

For fear and melancholy meet ;

But this is calm ; there cannot be

A more entire tranquillity. 1405

Does then the Bard sleep here indeed ?

Or is it but a groundless creed ?

What matters it ? — I blame them not

Whose fancy in this lonely spot

Was moved ; and in such way express'd 1410  
 Their notion of its perfect rest.  
 A convent, even a hermit's cell,  
 Would break the silence of this Dell :  
 It is not quiet, is not ease ;  
 But something deeper far than these : 1415  
 The separation that is here  
 Is of the grave ; and of austere  
 Yet happy feelings of the dead :  
 And, therefore, was it rightly said  
 That Ossian, last of all his race ! 1420  
 Lies buried in this lonely place.

## XXXVIII

The World is too much with us ; late and soon,  
 Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers ;  
 Little we see in Nature that is ours ;  
 We have given our hearts away, a sordid boon ! 1425

This Sea that bares her bosom to the moon,  
 The winds that will be howling at all hours  
 And are up-gather'd now like sleeping flowers,  
 For this, for every thing, we are out of tune ;

It moves us not. — Great God ! I'd rather be 1430  
 A Pagan suckled in a creed outworn, —  
 So might I, standing on this pleasant lea,  
 Have glimpses that would make me less forlorn ;  
 Have sight of Proteus rising from the sea ;  
 Or hear old Triton blow his wreathéd horn. 1435

## XXXIX

## WITHIN KING'S COLLEGE CHAPEL, CAMBRIDGE

Tax not the royal Saint<sup>1</sup> with vain expense,  
With ill-match'd aims the Architect who plann'd  
(Albeit labouring for a scanty band  
Of white-robed Scholars only) this immense

And glorious work of fine intelligence ! 1440  
— Give all thou canst ; high Heaven rejects the lore  
Of nicely-calculated less or more : —  
So deem'd the man who fashion'd for the sense

These lofty pillars, spread that branching roof  
Self-poised, and scoop'd into ten thousand cells 1445  
Where light and shade repose, where music dwells

Lingering — and wandering on as loth to die ;  
Like thoughts whose very sweetness yieldeth proof  
That they were born for immortality.

## XL

## THE TWO APRIL MORNINGS

We walk'd along, while bright and red 1450  
Uprose the morning sun ;  
And Matthew stopp'd, he look'd, and said  
' The will of God be done ! '

<sup>1</sup> Henry VI.



A village schoolmaster was he,  
With hair of glittering grey ; 1455  
As blithe a man as you could see  
On a spring holiday.

And on that morning, through the grass  
And by the steaming rills  
We travell'd merrily, to pass 1460  
A day among the hills.

' Our work,' said I, ' was well begun ;  
Then, from thy breast what thought,  
Beneath so beautiful a sun,  
So sad a sigh has brought ? ' 1465

A second time did Matthew stop ;  
And fixing still his eye  
Upon the eastern mountain-top,  
To me he made reply :

' Yon cloud with that long purple cleft 1470  
Brings fresh into my mind  
A day like this, which I have left  
Full thirty years behind.

' And just above yon slope of corn  
Such colours, and no other, 1475  
Were in the sky that April morn,  
Of this the very brother.

' With rod and line I sued the sport  
Which that sweet season gave,

And to the church-yard come, stopp'd short 1480  
Beside my daughter's grave.

' Nine summers had she scarcely seen,  
The pride of all the vale ;  
And then she sang, — she would have been  
A very nightingale. 1485

' Six feet in earth my Emma lay ;  
And yet I loved her more —  
For so it seem'd, — than till that day  
I e'er had loved before.

' And turning from her grave, I met, 1490  
Beside the churchyard yew,  
A blooming Girl, whose hair was wet  
With points of morning dew.

' A basket on her head she bare ;  
Her brow was smooth and white : 1495  
To see a child so very fair,  
It was a pure delight !

' No fountain from its rocky cave  
E'er tripp'd with foot so free ;  
She seem'd as happy as a wave 1500  
That dances on the sea.

' There came from me a sigh of pain  
Which I could ill confine ;  
I look'd at her, and look'd again :  
And did not wish her mine ! ' 1505

— Matthew is in his grave, yet now  
 Methinks I see him stand  
 As at that moment, with a bough  
 Of wilding in his hand.

## XLI

## THE FOUNTAIN

*A Conversation*

We talk'd with open heart, and tongue 1510  
 Affectionate and true,  
 A pair of friends, though I was young,  
 And Matthew seventy-two.

We lay beneath a spreading oak,  
 Beside a mossy seat; 1515  
 And from the turf a fountain broke  
 And gurgled at our feet.

‘ Now, Matthew ! ’ said I, ‘ let us match  
 This water’s pleasant tune  
 With some old border-song, or catch <sup>1</sup> 1520  
 That suits a summer’s noon ;

‘ Or of the church-clock and the chimes  
 Sing here beneath the shade  
 That half-mad thing of witty rhymes  
 Which you last April made ! ’ 1525

<sup>1</sup> A merry song.

In silence Matthew lay, and eyed  
The spring beneath the tree ;  
And thus the dear old man replied,  
The grey-hair'd man of glee :

‘ No check, no stay, this Streamlet fears, 1530  
How merrily it goes !  
'Twill murmur on a thousand years  
And flow as now it flows.

‘ And here, on this delightful day,  
I cannot choose but think 1535  
How oft, a vigorous man, I lay  
Beside this fountain's brink.

‘ My eyes are dim with childish tears,  
My heart is idly stirr'd,  
For the same sound is in my ears 1540  
Which in those days I heard.

‘ Thus fares it still in our decay :  
And yet the wiser mind  
Mourns less for what Age takes away,  
Than what it leaves behind. 1545

‘ The blackbird amid leafy trees,  
The lark above the hill,  
Let loose their carols when they please,  
Are quiet when they will.

‘ With Nature never do they wage 1550  
A foolish strife ; they see

A happy youth, and their old age  
Is beautiful and free :

‘ But we are press’d by heavy laws ;  
And often, glad no more, 1555  
We wear a face of joy, because  
We have been glad of yore.

‘ If there be one who need bemoan  
His kindred laid in earth,  
The household hearts that were his own, —  
It is the man of mirth. 1561

‘ My days, my friend, are almost gone,  
My life has been approved,  
And many love me ; but by none  
Am I enough beloved.’ 1565

‘ Now both himself and me he wrongs,  
The man who thus complains !  
I live and sing my idle songs  
Upon these happy plains :

‘ And Matthew, for thy children dead 1570  
I’ll be a son to thee !’  
At this he grasp’d my hand and said,  
‘ Alas ! that cannot be.’

— We rose up from the fountain-side ;  
And down the smooth descent 1573  
Of the green sheep-track did we glide ;  
And through the wood we went ;



And ere we came to Leonard's rock  
He sang those witty rhymes  
About the crazy old church-clock, 1580  
And the bewilder'd chimes.

## XLII

## THE TROSACHS

There's not a nook within this solemn Pass,  
But were an apt confessional for One  
Taught by his summer spent, his autumn gone,  
That Life is but a tale of morning grass 1585

Wither'd at eve. From scenes of art which chase  
That thought away, turn, and with watchful eyes  
Feed it 'mid Nature's old felicities,  
Rocks, rivers, and smooth lakes more clear than glass

Untouch'd, unbreathed upon : — Thrice happy quest,  
If from a golden perch of aspen spray 1591  
(October's workmanship to rival May),

The pensive warbler of the ruddy breast  
That moral sweeten by a heaven-taught lay,  
Lulling the year, with all its cares, to rest ! 1595

## XLIII

My heart leaps up when I behold  
A rainbow in the sky :  
So was it when my life began,  
So is it now I am a man,

So be it when I shall grow old

1600

Or let me die !

The Child is father of the Man :

And I could wish my days to be

Bound each to each by natural piety.

#### XLIV

#### ODE ON INTIMATIONS OF IMMORTALITY FROM RECOL- LECTIONS OF EARLY CHILDHOOD

There was a time when meadow, grove, and stream,

The earth, and every common sight

1606

To me did seem

Apparell'd in celestial light,

The glory and the freshness of a dream.

It is not now as it hath been of yore ; —

1610

Turn wheresoe'er I may,

By night or day,

The things which I have seen I now can see no more.

The rainbow comes and goes,

And lovely is the rose ;

1615

The moon doth with delight

Look round her when the heavens are bare ;

Waters on a starry night

Are beautiful and fair ;

The sunshine is a glorious birth ;

1620

But yet I know, where'er I go,

That there hath past away a glory from the earth.

Now, while the birds thus sing a joyous song,  
 And while the young lambs bound  
     As to the tabor's sound, 1625  
 To me alone there came a thought of grief:  
 A timely utterance gave that thought relief,  
     And I again am strong.  
 The cataracts blow their trumpets from the steep; —  
 No more shall grief of mine the season wrong: 1630  
 I hear the echoes through the mountains throng,  
 The winds come to me from the fields of sleep,  
     And all the earth is gay;  
         Land and sea  
 Give themselves up to jollity, 1635  
     And with the heart of May  
 Doth every beast keep holiday; —  
         Thou child of joy  
 Shout round me, let me hear thy shouts, thou happy  
     Shepherd-boy!

Ye blesséd Creatures, I have heard the call 1640  
     Ye to each other make; I see  
 The heavens laugh with you in your jubilee;  
     My heart is at your festival,  
     My head hath its coronal,<sup>1</sup>  
 The fulness of your bliss, I feel — I feel it all. 1645  
     Oh evil day! If I were sullen  
     While Earth herself is adorning  
         This sweet May-morning;  
     And the children are culling

<sup>1</sup> Crown.

On every side 1650  
In a thousand valleys far and wide,  
Fresh flowers ; while the sun shines warm  
And the babe leaps up on his mother's arm : —  
I hear, I hear, with joy I hear !  
— But there's a tree, of many, one, 1655  
A single field which I have look'd upon,  
Both of them speak of something that is gone :  
The pansy at my feet  
Doth the same tale repeat :  
Whither is fled the visionary gleam ? 1660  
Where is it now, the glory and the dream?  
  
Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting ;  
The Soul that rises with us, our life's Star,  
Hath had elsewhere its setting  
And cometh from afar ; 1665  
Not in entire forgetfulness,  
And not in utter nakedness,  
But trailing clouds of glory do we come  
From God, who is our home :  
Heaven lies about us in our infancy ! 1670  
Shades of the prison-house begin to close  
Upon the growing Boy,  
But he beholds the light, and whence it flows,  
He sees it in his joy ;  
The Youth, who daily farther from the east 1675  
Must travel, still is Nature's priest,  
And by the vision splendid  
Is on his way attended ;

At length the Man perceives it die away,  
And fade into the light of common day. 1685

Earth fills her lap with pleasures of her own ;  
Yearnings she hath in her own natural kind,  
And, even with something of a mother's mind  
    And no unworthy aim,  
    The homely nurse doth all she can 1685  
To make her foster-child, her inmate, Man,  
    Forget the glories he hath known,  
And that imperial palace whence he came.

Behold the Child among his new-born blisses,  
A six years' darling of a pigmy size ! 1690  
See, where 'mid work of his own hand he lies,  
Fretted by sallies of his mother's kisses,  
With light upon him from his father's eyes !  
See, at his feet, some little plan or chart,  
Some fragment from his dream of human life, 1695  
Shaped by himself with newly-learnéd art ;  
    A wedding or a festival,  
    A mourning or a funeral ;  
    And this hath now his heart,  
And unto this he frames his song : 1700  
    Then will he fit his tongue  
To dialogues of business, love, or strife ;  
    But it will not be long  
    Ere this be thrown aside,  
    And with new joy and pride 1705  
The little actor cons another part ;



Filling from time to time his 'humorous stage'  
With all the Persons, down to palsied Age,  
That life brings with her in her equipage;  
    As if his whole vocation  
    Were endless imitation.

1710

Thou, whose exterior semblance doth belie  
    Thy soul's immensity;  
Thou best philosopher, who yet dost keep  
Thy heritage, thou eye among the blind,  
That, deaf and silent, read'st the eternal deep,  
Haunted for ever by the eternal Mind, —  
    Mighty Prophet! Seer blest!  
    On whom those truths do rest  
Which we are toiling all our lives to find,  
In darkness lost, the darkness of the grave;  
Thou, over whom thy Immortality  
Broods like the day, a master o'er a slave,  
A Presence which is not to be put by;  
Thou little child, yet glorious in the might  
Of heaven-born freedom on thy being's height,  
Why with such earnest pains dost thou provoke  
The years to bring the inevitable yoke,  
Thus blindly with thy blessedness at strife?  
Full soon thy soul shall have her earthly freight,  
And custom lie upon thee with a weight  
Heavy as frost, and deep almost as life!

1715

1720

1725

1730

O joy! that in our embers  
Is something that doth live,

## Selected Poems

155

That Nature yet remembers

1735

What was so fugitive !

The thought of our past years in me doth breed

Perpetual benediction : not indeed

For that which is most worthy to be blest,

Delight and liberty, the simple creed

1740

Of Childhood, whether busy or at rest,

With new-fledged hope still fluttering in his breast : —

— Not for these I raise

The song of thanks and praise ;

But for those obstinate questionings

1745

Of sense and outward things,

Fallings from us, vanishings ;

Blank misgivings of a creature

Moving about in worlds not realized,

High instincts, before which our mortal nature

1750

Did tremble like a guilty thing surprized :

But for those first affections,

Those shadowy recollections,

Which, be they what they may,

Are yet the fountain-light of all our day,

1755

Are yet a master-light of all our seeing ;

Uphold us, cherish, and have power to make

Our noisy years seem moments in the being

Of the eternal Silence : truths that wake,

To perish never ;

1760

Which neither listlessness, nor mad endeavour,

Nor man nor boy

Nor all that is at enmity with joy,

Can utterly abolish or destroy !

Hence, in a season of calm weather 1765  
    Though inland far we be,  
Our souls have sight of that immortal sea  
    Which brought us hither ;  
    Can in a moment travel thither —  
And see the children sport upon the shore, 1770  
And hear the mighty waters rolling evermore.

Then, sing ye birds, sing, sing a joyous song !  
    And let the young lambs bound  
    As to the tabor's sound !  
We, in thought, will join your throng 1775  
    Ye that pipe and ye that play,  
    Ye that through your hearts to-day  
    Feel the gladness of the May !  
What though the radiance which was once so bright  
Be now for ever taken from my sight, 1780  
    Though nothing can bring back the hour  
Of splendour in the grass, of glory in the flower ;  
    We will grieve not, rather find  
    Strength in what remains behind ;  
    In the primal sympathy 1785  
    Which having been must ever be ;  
    In the soothing thoughts that spring  
    Out of human suffering ;  
    In the faith that looks through death,  
In years that bring the philosophic mind. 1790

And O, ye Fountains, Meadows, Hills, and Groves,  
Forbode not any severing of our loves !

Yet in my heart of hearts I feel your might ;  
I only have relinquish'd one delight  
To live beneath your more habitual sway : 1795  
I love the brooks which down their channels fret  
Even more than when I tripp'd lightly as they ;  
The innocent brightness of a new-born day  
    Is lovely yet ;  
The clouds that gather round the setting sun 1800  
Do take a sober colouring from an eye  
That hath kept watch o'er man's mortality ;  
Another race hath been, and other palms are won.  
Thanks to the human heart by which we live,  
Thanks to its tenderness, its joys, and fears, 1805  
To me the meanest flower that blows can give  
Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears.





## PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY

### I. LIFE

BYRON, Shelley, and Keats, whose names are joined as often as any three in English letters, were — with all their differences — alike in one sad respect. You cannot read their biographies without feeling a pity and a wonder that such rare genius should be given to the world so briefly. Too soon, with all three, the shears of the blind Fury slit the thin-spun life.

Of the truly great English poets, Byron and Shelley stand almost alone as men of high birth. Though not of the nobility, Percy Bysshe Shelley came of a family both rich and ancient. His father, Timothy Shelley (afterward Sir Timothy), had married the very beautiful Elizabeth Pilfold. Of their four daughters and two sons, the eldest was the poet, who was born August 4, 1792, at Field Place, near Horsham, Sussex. He might have been a changeling; for never before or since did such conventional, worldly people rear a child so unworldly and so ethereal. Lord Chesterfield, with no greater surprise, might have found himself father to Ariel.

Shelley passed his boyhood at Field Place, where, his sister Hellen has told us, he “would frequently come into the nursery, and was full of a peculiar kind

of pranks. One piece of mischief, for which he was rebuked, was running a stick through the ceiling of a low passage to find some new chamber, which could be made effective for some new flights of imagination." His sister has also left a picture of him as a slight and beautiful figure, with eyes of a "wild fixed beauty," skin like snow, and bright ringlets covering his head; and tells how, while playing at ghosts and alchemists, the children all dressed themselves "in strange costumes to personate spirits or fiends, and Bysshe would take a fire-stove and fill it with some inflammable liquid and carry it flaming into the kitchen and to the back door." The boy was also friends with an "Old Snake" who had lived for several generations in the garden.

When ten years old, he was sent away to school, at Sion House, Brentford. Here, while dreaming out at the windows, or wandering in a revery, he absorbed the classic languages as if without an effort. On holidays, when the other boys went to their games, his slight and delicate figure might be seen pacing back and forth under the playground walls, in deep and vague meditation. In 1804 he left Sion House for Eton, where again he was not popular, though he won admiration from the younger boys, of his own age, by leading a rebellion against the custom of fagging. This last, you might guess, is exactly what Shelley would do; for his whole life was a protest against all established customs which had any trace of oppression or tyranny. His schoolmates elected him "The Atheist," — a title which, his friend Hogg says, was given to the boy who

defied the rules most openly. In studies he was not idle, but irregular, reading Greek and Latin with astonishing swiftness, dabbling with crucibles, microscopes, and Leyden jars, and going about, even on holidays at home, with hands and clothes "constantly stained and corroded by acids." Science fascinated him, but he did not really study so much as play at it, like any boy who has read about magicians and alchemists.

He also wrote a wild and foolish novel called *Zastrozzi*, which strangely enough got itself published in 1810, and which brought him in £40. He spent the money, or part of it, on a farewell supper with eight other school-boys, and left Eton for Oxford. Hogg, his college friend and biographer, describes him as a freshman, and their life as undergraduates. "He was tall, but he stooped so much that he seemed of a low stature. His clothes were expensive, and made according to the most approved mode, . . . but they were tumbled, rumpled, unbrushed. His gestures were abrupt, and sometimes violent, . . . yet more frequently gentle and graceful. His complexion was . . . almost feminine, of the purest red and white. . . . His features . . . and particularly his head, were . . . unusually small; yet the last *appeared* of a remarkable bulk, for his hair was long and bushy, and . . . in the agonies . . . of anxious thought, he often rubbed it fiercely with his hands . . . so that it was singularly wild and rough. . . . His features . . . breathed an animation, a fire, an enthusiasm, a vivid



and preternatural intelligence, that I never met with in any other countenance." His voice "was excruciating; it was intolerably shrill, harsh, and discordant." Like Byron, Shelley was a good shot, and carried and fired pistols everywhere, so recklessly as to be a danger both to others and to himself. His rooms were a wild confusion of chemical and electrical apparatus, jumbled with half-finished manuscripts, perilous acids, and costly books. He read, says Hogg, sixteen hours out of the twenty-four; walked, ate, and talked with his friend; and at six in the evening, "even in the midst of a most animated narrative," would stretch out on the rug, with his "little round head" fairly in the fire, and so lie, "in a sweet and mighty oblivion, until ten, when he would suddenly start up, and rubbing his eyes with great violence, and passing his fingers swiftly through his long hair, would . . . begin to recite verses, either . . . his own . . . or from the works of others, with a rapidity and an energy that were often quite painful."

Whatever this undergraduate career might have led to, it was cut short on March 25, 1811. Always eager to speculate and argue on philosophy and religion, Shelley had published a two-page pamphlet called *The Necessity of Atheism*. Its spirit seems to have been callow rather than wicked; but the Fellows of the college pounced upon it, and expelled its author. With Hogg — who stood by him and was also expelled — Shelley left Oxford, and took the coach for London. His father had forbidden him to return home, his supply of money was scant, and he was forced to give up all hope

of marrying the cousin, Harriet Grove, to whom he had once been virtually engaged.

With these prospects, Shelley took a characteristic step. We must be fair, by the way, to his father, who tried to be reconciled and proposed compromises. Shelley would not listen. For all compromise he had an inborn, fiery hatred. This is the single and lame excuse for the contempt with which he treated his father ; this, and the twist which genius gives a man, the fact that a young and unbounded imagination could not understand the ties of common life. At all events, with such a twist and with such prospects, Shelley now determined to marry. Harriet Westbrook, a pink and white girl of sixteen, listened to his doctrines of free thought, and persuaded him that she was ill-treated both at home and at school. The plea of tyranny was enough for the poet ; they eloped in a hackney coach that autumn, and were married in Edinburgh. Their married life is difficult to trace. It began happily in Scotland, continued through many rapid flittings from house to house and city to city, and — after they had tried to stir up a revolution in Ireland, by throwing copies of an *Address to the Irish People* to men who passed beneath their balcony in Dublin — it ended by a separation in July, 1814. Meantime (1813), Shelley had published *Queen Mab*, an immature poem which confirmed the public in thinking him a dangerous infidel. And when, a fortnight after separating from his wife, he departed for the Continent with Mary Godwin, he became, like Byron, a sort of English monster.



Of his great lyric powers he had yet given no sign. It was only after his wanderings in France, Switzerland, and England, after the tragic death of his first wife Harriet and his marriage to Mary Godwin in 1816, that he settled in Italy, and with the shadow of death over him, began those four wonderful years of song. The list of his important works is very short. To *Queen Mab*, *Alastor*, and to *Laon and Cythna* — published in 1817, reissued next year as *The Revolt of Islam* — he now added, in 1819, *The Cenci*, and in 1820, *Prometheus Unbound*; in 1821, *Epipsychidion* and his lament for the death of Keats, *Adonais*; and in 1822, *Hellas*. His best lyrics were written in this period, while he lived at Naples, Leghorn, or Pisa, a constant companion of Lord Byron, and like him, exiled as an enemy to society. He had friends and visitors, however, besides Byron, — his cousin Captain Medwin, Mr. and Mrs. Williams, the Greek prince and revolutionist Mavrocordatos, Leigh Hunt, and the Cornish rover and free-lance, Captain Trelawny.

It is Trelawny who has told us how Shelley passed his days. "[He] was up at six or seven, reading Plato, Sophocles, or Spinoza, with the accompaniment of a hunch of dry bread; then he joined Williams in a sail on the Arno, in a flat-bottomed skiff, book in hand, and from thence he went to the pine-forest, or some out-of-the-way place. When the birds went to roost, he returned home, and talked and read until midnight." Once Trelawny, after hunting for Shelley all day in the pine forest near Pisa, was guided by an old *con-*

*tadino* to his retreat. "As we advanced, the ground swelled into mounds and hollows. By-and-by the old fellow pointed with his stick to a hat, books, and loose papers lying about, and then to a deep pool of dark glimmering water, saying 'Eccolo !' I thought he meant that Shelley was in or under the water. The careless, not to say impatient, way in which the Poet bore his burden of life, caused a vague dread amongst his family and friends that he might lose or cast it away at any moment.

"The strong light streamed through the opening of the trees. One of the pines, undermined by the water, had fallen into it. Under its lea, and nearly hidden, sat the Poet, gazing on the dark mirror beneath, so lost in his bardish revery that he did not hear my approach. There the trees were stunted and bent, and their crowns were shorn like friars by the sea breezes, excepting a cluster of three, under which Shelley's traps were lying; these overtopped the rest. To avoid startling the Poet out of his dream, I squatted under the lofty trees, and opened his books. One was a volume of his favourite Greek dramatist, Sophocles — the same that I found in his pocket after death — and the other was a volume of Shakespeare." The dreamer had been writing the lyric *Ariel to Miranda*: — *Take, etc.* "It was a frightful scrawl; words smeared out with his finger, and one upon the other, over and over in tiers and all run together 'in most admired disorder'; it might have been taken for a sketch of a marsh overgrown with bulrushes, and the blots for wild ducks.

. . . On my observing this to him, he answered, 'When my brain gets heated with thought, it soon boils, and throws off images and words faster than I can skim them off.' "

In these last days of wonderful activity, his fate appears to gather thickly over Shelley, as over Shakespeare's Brutus. Both he and his friends talked much of death, saw visions, felt premonitions. Twice it seemed to the poet that Allegra, Byron's dead child, rose laughing from the sea to beckon him. At midnight the vision of a cloaked figure stood at his bedside, summoned him to follow to another room, and there, unshrouding its cloak, revealed to the terrified beholder his own features. Among such visions he continued to write his last poem, *The Triumph of Life*. The fragment remains broken at the words: "Then what is Life? I cried —"

He was soon to find the answer. On July 8, 1822, he and Edward Williams, with a sailor boy named Charles Vivian, set sail from Leghorn for Lerici, in their yacht, the *Don Juan*. Captain Trelawny, aboard Byron's *Bolivar* in the harbour, watching them start, heard his Genoese mate grumble — "the devil is brewing mischief." The departing sail was lost in a fog. A short but violent storm broke soon after. For ten days Trelawny patrolled with the coast-guardsmen, before Shelley's body was found on the sand near Via Reggio. In one pocket was "the volume of Sophocles . . . and Keats's poems in the other, doubled back, as if the reader, in the act of reading, had hastily thrust it away."



Only the poet's ashes could be taken to Rome for burial. A funeral pyre was therefore necessary. Captain Trelawny, eye-witness to many strange happenings, saw none stranger than the last rites. "Byron and Leigh Hunt arrived in the carriage, attended by soldiers, and the Health Officer. . . . The lonely and grand scenery that surrounded us, so exactly harmonized with Shelley's genius, that I could imagine his spirit soaring over us. The sea, with the islands of Gorgona, Capraja, and Elba, was before us; old battle-mented watch-towers stretched along the coast, backed by the marble-crowned Apennines glistening in the sun. . . . The work went on silently . . . not a word was spoken, for the Italians have a touch of sentiment, and their feelings are easily excited into sympathy. Byron was silent and thoughtful. . . . After the fire was well kindled . . . more wine was poured over Shelley's dead body than he had consumed during his life. This with the oil and salt made the yellow flames glisten and quiver. The heat from the sun and fire was so intense that the atmosphere was tremulous and wavy. . . . The fire was so fierce as to produce a white heat on the iron, and to reduce its contents to grey ashes. . . . but what surprised us all was that the heart remained entire. In snatching this relic from the fiery furnace, my hand was severely burnt."

Shelley's heart was carried to England; his ashes were taken to Rome, where they lie in the Protestant cemetery, near his son William and his friend Keats. Leigh Hunt wrote the epitaph:—

“PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY  
COR CORDIUM

Natus iv. Aug. MDCCXCII.

Obiit viii. Jul. MDCCCXXII.”

To this Trelawny added the lines sung by another Ariel in another *Tempest*:—

“Nothing of him that doth fade,  
But doth suffer a sea-change  
Into something rich and strange.”

## II. POEMS

If you had lived a hundred years ago, you would probably have heard of Shelley's poems as the work of a dangerous and wicked young man who proclaimed theories destructive to the church, the state, and the home. If, however, you were to read of those poems only the selections in the present book, you would be left wondering how their author could possibly have earned so bad a name. You will find, in reading them, nothing violent or incendiary, no signs of the “Necessity of Atheism,” no fiery impatience for the millennium, no ardent and eloquent struggle —

“ . . . to repeal  
Large codes of fraud and woe.”

Indeed, you will not find Shelley speaking as a revolutionist at all, except in the *Lines Written among the Euganean Hills*, where he prophesied the downfall of Venice, with her —

“ . . . conquest-branded brow  
Stooping to the slave of slaves.”



Except for this hint, and one or two even less direct, you might not guess that the clear spirit of this singer was ever troubled by the rebellious doctrine of William Godwin.

Indeed, there is no strong reason why you should learn to know Shelley as a revolutionary poet. Later some of you may read, perhaps, those other poems which, like *The Revolt of Islam*, *Hellas*, or *Prometheus Unbound*, show what violent sympathy he felt with revolutions both real and imagined, and with what high hopes he looked forward to a bloodless victory over the established order of his day, and to a new and early brotherhood of man. For the present, however, the few short pieces in this book will disclose to you all, or nearly all, the other great leading motives of the poet, the beauties of his verse, and the quality of his genius.

A solitary man, and none other, must have written such lines as —

“Alas! I have nor hope nor health,  
Nor peace within nor calm around; . . .  
Nor fame, nor power, nor love, nor leisure.  
Others I see whom these surround —  
Smiling they live, and call life pleasure; —  
To me that cup has been dealt in another measure.”

When he sits beside “the deep’s untrampled floor, . . . upon the sands alone,” he utters his most poignant thought in the exclamation —

“How sweet! did any heart now share in my emotion.”

And to this brooding sense of loneliness is added the discontent of a young man who has a grievance against the world, who finds nothing "the world contains in which he could approve." Discontent and longing mingle with his moments of keenest joy. It is not that he misses any human companion, or longs for some absent person, like Wordsworth when he wrote —

"Surprised by joy, impatient as the Wind,  
I turned to share the transport — Oh! with whom  
But Thee, deep buried in the silent tomb ;"

for with Shelley, the beloved absent being is a vague Unknown. When he brings his tribute of "visionary flowers," it is to no one on earth: —

"... elate and gay,  
I hastened to the spot whence I had come,  
That I might there present it — oh! to whom?"

The question remains unanswered. But it is the question, plainly, of an idealist. When you are older, you will find that this Unknown was the ideal of Intellectual Beauty, which Shelley pursued through all his short life and his long art.

Beauty, to Wordsworth, lay all about and close at hand in the meanest objects of common life, when those objects were seized upon and contemplated in the light of the poet's emotion. To Shelley (though perhaps he learned some part of that truth from the Cumbrian poet) beauty lay at the end of a quest, in some region as far off as the No Man's Land to which Alastor travelled. This being so, you will understand why Shelley, who

could and sometimes did describe outdoor things in terms concrete and vivid, brings before your inward eye fewer actual scenes of natural beauty than his companion poets. His Italian landscapes are likely to be real landscapes ; but England does not produce such vales of "musk-rose twined with jasmine," such stormy crags or "ghastly torrents" or primeval cedars, as Shelley used for background ; and even in Italy he sees less beauty of earth than of light and air. The humbler living things are absent : no green linnet flits among its brother leaves, no poor Wat, the hare, doubles through the thickets of Shelley's wood ; so that when, in the fourth stanza of *The Recollection*, you hear the woodpecker disturbing the silence of the trees, you greet with surprise a sound so unexpectedly familiar. The living creatures in Shelley are almost always birds ; and those birds, whether the grey shades of Euganean rooks soaring in dewy mists, or the skylark lost "in the golden lightning of the sunken sun," are tiny points of animate life, high above him, nearly disembodied and dissolved in light and space.

Light and space, indeed, are Shelley's own domain. For this dreamy, isolated spirit, so quick and volatile that he has often been likened to Ariel, no grosser elements would serve than air and water. Shelley is not a narrative poet, for the reason that no story could find a foothold in his airy medium. Events, even the greatest events, he recounts as happening at a vast distance, and, as it were, in the sky. Were he to sing the battle of the giants and the gods, it would become a colossal but invisible warfare somewhere at the back of

the rainbow or the sunset. On the other hand, the fascination which ethereal heights and lights exerted on him is the source of his most beautiful and magical effects. Where has aspiration been given greater depth and distance than in his line "The desire of the moth for the star"? And as for the description of sights in Nature, no poet has left more lasting pictures of lights, calm or stormy, seen in the heavens, in pools, or upon the sea. His waves are —

"Light dissolved in star-showers thrown."

In the woods he invites us —

"To the pools where winter rains  
Image all their roof of leaves" —

or to where —

"Sweet views which in our world above  
Can never well be seen,  
Were imaged in the water's love  
Of that fair forest green;  
And all was interfused beneath  
With an Elysian glow,  
An atmosphere without a breath,  
A softer day below.  
Like one beloved, the scene had lent  
To the dark water's breast  
Its every leaf and lineament  
With more than truth exprest."

Before a tempest, he makes us see —

"Like the bright hair uplifted from the head  
Of some fierce Mænad, ev'n from the dim verge  
Of the horizon to the Zenith's height —  
The locks of the approaching storm."



And to that wonderful catalogue of flowers — which in a less subtle poet had been still life — Shelley gives an unearthly, tremulous beauty, as with his —

“ . . . floating water-lilies, broad and bright,  
Which lit the oak that overhung the hedge  
With moonlight beams of their own watery light.”

Blossoms, indeed, he often thus describes as luminous, like those of “the moonlight-coloured May.” His skylark, which soars and sings forever in English poetry, is likened to a cloud of fire, to a star dissolved in the broad daylight, to a glow-worm shining in dewy grass, and to the bright drops from rainbow clouds. He changes all objects into something rich and strange, not of the sea, but of the sky; and so radiant is the sky, in his best and highest moments, that like his lark he becomes —

“ . . . a poet hidden  
In the light of thought.”

### III. BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

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## SELECTIONS FROM SHELLEY

	PAGE
THE INDIAN SERENADE . . . . .	175
I FEAR THY KISSES, GENTLE MAIDEN . . . . .	176
LOVE'S PHILOSOPHY . . . . .	176
TO THE NIGHT . . . . .	177
THE FLIGHT OF LOVE . . . . .	178
ONE WORD IS TOO OFTEN PROFANED . . . . .	179
STANZAS WRITTEN IN DEJECTION NEAR NAPLES . . . . .	180
TO A SKYLARK . . . . .	181
OZYMANDIAS OF EGYPT . . . . .	186
TO A LADY, WITH A GUITAR . . . . .	186
THE INVITATION . . . . .	189
THE RECOLLECTION . . . . .	191
TO THE MOON . . . . .	195
A DREAM OF THE UNKNOWN . . . . .	195
WRITTEN AMONG THE EUGANEAN HILLS . . . . .	197
ODE TO THE WEST WIND . . . . .	203
THE POET'S DREAM . . . . .	206
A DIRGE . . . . .	207
THRENOS . . . . .	207
MUSIC, WHEN SOFT VOICES DIE . . . . .	207

# SELECTIONS FROM SHELLEY

## I

### THE INDIAN SERENADE

I ARISE from dreams of Thee  
In the first sweet sleep of night,  
When the winds are breathing low  
And the stars are shining bright :  
I arise from dreams of thee, 5  
And a spirit in my feet  
Hath led me — who knows how ?  
To thy chamber-window, Sweet !

The wandering airs they faint  
On the dark, the silent stream — 10  
The champak odours fail  
Like sweet thoughts in a dream ;  
The nightingale's complaint  
It dies upon her heart,  
As I must die on thine 15  
O belovéd as thou art !

Oh lift me from the grass !  
I die, I faint, I fail !  
Let thy love in kisses rain  
On my lips and eyelids pale. 20

My cheek is cold and white, alas !  
My heart beats loud and fast ;  
Oh ! press it close to thine again  
Where it will break at last.

## II

I fear thy kisses, gentle maiden ; 25  
Thou needest not fear mine ;  
My spirit is too deeply laden  
Ever to burthen thine.

I fear thy mien, thy tones, thy motion ;  
Thou needest not fear mine ; 30  
Innocent is the heart's devotion  
With which I worship thine.

## III

## LOVE'S PHILOSOPHY

The fountains mingle with the river  
And the rivers with the ocean,  
The winds of heaven mix for ever 35  
With a sweet emotion ;  
Nothing in the world is single,  
All things by a law divine  
In one another's being mingle —  
Why not I with thine ? 40

See the mountains kiss high heaven,  
And the waves clasp one another ;  
No sister-flower would be forgiven  
If it disdain'd its brother :

And the sunlight clasps the earth,  
And the moonbeams kiss the sea —  
What are all these kissings worth,  
If thou kiss not me?

## IV

## TO THE NIGHT

Swiftly walk over the western wave,  
Spirit of Night !

Out of the misty eastern cave  
Where, all the long and lone daylight,  
Thou wovest dreams of joy and fear  
Which make thee terrible and dear, —  
Swift be thy flight !

Wrap thy form in a mantle grey  
                     Star-inwrought ;  
 Blind with thine hair the eyes of Day,  
 Kiss her until she be wearied out :  
 Then wander o'er city and sea and land,                      60  
 Touching all with thine opiate wand —  
                     Come, long-sought !

When I arose and saw the dawn,  
                                 I sigh'd for thee ;  
 When light rode high, and the dew was gone,                   65  
 And noon lay heavy on flower and tree,  
 And the weary Day turn'd to his rest  
 Lingerin' like an unloved guest,  
                                 I sigh'd for thee.

Thy brother Death came, and cried 70  
                                 Wouldst thou me?

Thy sweet child Sleep, the filmy-eyed,  
 Murmur'd like a noon-tide bee  
 Shall I nestle near thy side?

Wouldst thou me? — And I replied 75  
                                 No, not thee!

Death will come when thou art dead,  
                                 Soon, too soon —

Sleep will come when thou art fled;  
 Of neither would I ask the boon 80

I ask of thee, belovéd Night —  
 Swift be thine approaching flight,  
                                 Come soon, soon!

## V

### THE FLIGHT OF LOVE

When the lamp is shatter'd  
 The light in the dust lies dead — 85

When the cloud is scatter'd,  
 The rainbow's glory is shed.

When the lute is broken,  
 Sweet tones are remember'd not;  
 When the lips have spoken, 90  
 Loved accents are soon forgot.

As music and splendour  
 Survive not the lamp and the lute,



The heart's echoes render  
 No song when the spirit is mute — 95  
 No song but sad dirges,  
 Like the wind through a ruin'd cell,  
 Or the mournful surges  
 That ring the dead seaman's knell.

When hearts have once mingled, 100  
 Love first leaves the well-built nest ;  
 The weak one is singled  
 To endure what it once possesst.  
 O Love ! who bewailest  
 The frailty of all things here, 105  
 Why choose you the frailest  
 For your cradle, your home, and your bier ?

Its passions will rock thee  
 As the storms rock the ravens on high ;  
 Bright reason will mock thee 110  
 Like the sun from a wintry sky.  
 From thy nest every rafter  
 Will rot, and thine eagle home  
 Leave thee naked to laughter,  
 When leaves fall and cold winds come. 115

## VI

One word is too often profaned  
 For me to profane it,  
 One feeling too falsely disdain'd  
 For thee to disdain it.

One hope is too like despair 120  
 For prudence to smother,  
 And pity from thee more dear  
 Than that from another.

I can give not what men call love ;  
 But wilt thou accept not 125  
 The worship the heart lifts above  
 And the Heavens reject not :  
 The desire of the moth for the star,  
 Of the night for the morrow,  
 The devotion to something afar 130  
 From the sphere of our sorrow ?

## VII

## STANZAS WRITTEN IN DEJECTION NEAR NAPLES

The sun is warm, the sky is clear,  
 The waves are dancing fast and bright,  
 Blue isles and snowy mountains wear  
 The purple noon's transparent might : 135  
 The breath of the moist earth is light  
 Around its unexpanded buds ;  
 Like many a voice of one delight —  
 The winds', the birds', the ocean-floods' —  
 The city's voice itself is soft like Solitude's. 140

I see the deep's untrampled floor  
 With green and purple sea-weeds ströwn ;  
 I see the waves upon the shore  
 Like light dissolved in star-showers thrown :

I sit upon the sands alone ;  
The lightning of the noon-tide ocean  
Is flashing round me, and a tone  
Arises from its measured motion —  
How sweet ! did any heart now share in my emotion.

Alas ! I have nor hope nor health,  
Nor peace within nor calm around,  
Nor that content, surpassing wealth,  
The sage in meditation found,  
And walk'd with inward glory crown'd —  
Nor fame, nor power, nor love, nor leisure ;  
Others I see whom these surround —  
Smiling they live, and call life pleasure ;  
To me that cup has been dealt in another measure.

Yet now despair itself is mild  
Even as the winds and waters are ;  
I could lie down like a tired child,  
And weep away the life of care  
Which I have borne, and yet must bear, —  
Till death like sleep might steal on me,  
And I might feel in the warm air  
My cheek grow cold, and hear the sea  
Breathe o'er my dying brain its last monotony.

## VIII

## TO A SKYLARK

Hail to thee, blithe Spirit !  
Bird thou never wert,  
That from heaven, or near it

Pourest thy full heart  
In profuse strains of unpremeditated art.

Higher still and higher  
From the earth thou springest,  
Like a cloud of fire, 175  
The blue deep thou wingest,  
And singing still dost soar, and soaring ever singest.

In the golden lightning  
Of the sunken sun  
O'er which clouds are brightening, 180  
Thou dost float and run,  
Like an unbodied joy whose race is just begun.

The pale purple even  
Melts around thy flight ;  
Like a star of heaven 185  
In the broad daylight  
Thou art unseen, but yet I hear thy shrill delight :

Keen as are the arrows  
Of that silver sphere,  
Whose intense lamp narrows 190  
In the white dawn clear  
Until we hardly see, we feel that it is there.

All the earth and air  
With thy voice is loud,  
As, when night is bare, 195  
From one lonely cloud  
The moon rains out her beams, and heaven is over-  
flow'd.

What thou art we know not ;  
What is most like thee ?  
From rainbow clouds there flow not  
Drops so bright to see  
As from thy presence showers a rain of melody ; —

Like a poet hidden  
In the light of thought,  
Singing hymns unbidden,  
Till the world is wrought  
To sympathy with hopes and fears it heeded not :

Like a high-born maiden  
In a palace tower,  
Soothing her love-laden  
Soul in secret hour  
With music sweet as love, which overflows her bower :

Like a glow-worm golden  
In a dell of dew,  
Scattering unbeholden  
Its aerial hue  
Among the flowers and grass, which screen it from the  
view :

Like a rose embower'd  
In its own green leaves,  
By warm winds deflower'd,  
Till the scent it gives  
Makes faint with too much sweet these heavy-winged  
thieves.



Sound of vernal showers  
On the twinkling grass,  
Rain-awaken'd flowers, 225  
All that ever was  
Joyous, and clear, and fresh, thy music doth surpass.

Teach us, sprite or bird,  
What sweet thoughts are thine :  
I have never heard 230  
Praise of love or wine  
That panted forth a flood of rapture so divine.

Chorus hymeneal  
Or triumphal chaunt  
Match'd with thine, would be all 235  
But an empty vaunt —  
A thing wherein we feel there is some hidden want.

What objects are the fountains  
Of thy happy strain ?  
What fields, or waves, or mountains ? 240  
What shapes of sky or plain ?  
What love of thine own kind ? what ignorance of  
pain ?

With thy clear keen joyance  
Languor cannot be :  
Shadow of annoyance 245  
Never came near thee :  
Thou lovest ; but ne'er knew love's sad satiety.

Waking or asleep  
Thou of death must deem  
Things more true and deep 250  
Than we mortals dream,  
Or how could thy notes flow in such a crystal stream ?

We look before and after,  
And pine for what is not :  
Our sincerest laughter 255  
With some pain is fraught ;  
Our sweetest songs are those that tell of saddest  
thought.

Yet if we could scorn  
Hate, and pride, and fear ;  
If we were things born 260  
Not to shed a tear,  
I know not how thy joy we ever should come near.

Better than all measures  
Of delightful sound,  
Better than all treasures 265  
That in books are found,  
Thy skill to poet were, thou scorner of the ground !

Teach me half the gladness  
That thy brain must know,  
Such harmonious madness 270  
From my lips would flow,  
The world should listen then, as I am listening now !

## IX

## OZYMANDIAS OF EGYPT

I met a traveller from an antique land  
Who said : Two vast and trunkless legs of stone  
Stand in the desert. Near them on the sand, 275  
Half sunk, a shatter'd visage lies, whose frown  
And wrinkled lip and sneer of cold command  
Tell that its sculptor well those passions read  
Which yet survive, stamp'd on these lifeless things,  
The hand that mock'd them and the heart that fed;  
And on the pedestal these words appear : 281  
' My name is Ozymandias, king of kings :  
Look on my works, ye Mighty, and despair !'  
Nothing beside remains. Round the decay  
Of that colossal wreck, boundless and bare, 285  
The lone and level sands stretch far away.

## X

## TO A LADY, WITH A GUITAR

Ariel to Miranda : — Take  
This slave of music, for the sake  
Of him, who is the slave of thee ;  
And teach it all the harmony 290  
In which thou canst, and only thou,  
Make the delighted spirit glow,  
Till joy denies itself again  
And, too intense, is turn'd to pain.

For by permission and command  
Of thine own Prince Ferdinand,  
Poor Ariel sends this silent token  
Of more than ever can be spoken ;  
Your guardian spirit, Ariel, who  
From life to life must still pursue  
Your happiness, for thus alone  
Can Ariel ever find his own,  
From Prospero's enchanted cell,  
As the mighty verses tell,  
To the throne of Naples he  
Lit you o'er the trackless sea,  
Flitting on, your prow before,  
Like a living meteor.  
When you die, the silent Moon  
In her interlunar swoon  
Is not sadder in her cell  
Than deserted Ariel : —  
When you live again on earth,  
Like an unseen Star of birth  
Ariel guides you o'er the sea  
Of life from your nativity : —  
Many changes have been run  
Since Ferdinand and you begun  
Your course of love, and Ariel still  
Has track'd your steps and served your will.  
Now in humbler, happier lot,  
This is all remember'd not ;  
And now, alas ! the poor Sprite is  
Imprison'd for some fault of his

In a body like a grave — 325  
From you he only dares to crave,  
For his service and his sorrow  
A smile to-day, a song to-morrow.

The artist who this idol wrought  
To echo all harmonious thought, 330  
Fell'd a tree, while on the steep  
The woods were in their winter sleep,  
Rock'd in that repose divine  
On the wind-swept Apennine ;  
And dreaming, some of Autumn past, 335  
And some of Spring approaching fast,  
And some of April buds and showers,  
And some of songs in July bowers,  
And all of love : And so this tree, —  
Oh that such our death may be ! — 340  
Died in sleep, and felt no pain,  
To live in happier form again :  
From which, beneath heaven's fairest star,  
The artist wrought this loved Guitar ;  
And taught it justly to reply 345  
To all who question skilfully  
In language gentle as thine own ;  
Whispering in enamour'd tone  
Sweet oracles of woods and dells,  
And summer winds in sylvan cells : 350  
— For it had learnt all harmonies  
Of the plains and of the skies,  
Of the forests and the mountains,



And the many-voicéd fountains ;  
The clearest echoes of the hills, 355  
The softest notes of falling rills,  
The melodies of birds and bees,  
The murmuring of summer seas,  
And pattering rain, and breathing dew,  
And airs of evening ; and it knew 360  
That seldom-heard mysterious sound  
Which, driven on its diurnal round,  
As it floats through boundless day,  
Our world enkindles on its way :  
— All this it knows, but will not tell 365  
To those who cannot question well  
The Spirit that inhabits it ;  
It talks according to the wit  
Of its companions ; and no more  
Is heard than has been felt before 370  
By those who tempt it to betray  
These secrets of an elder day.  
But, sweetly as its answers will  
Flatter hands of perfect skill,  
It keeps its highest holiest tone 375  
For our beloved Friend alone.

## XI

## THE INVITATION

Best and brightest, come away, —  
Fairer far than this fair Day,

Which, like thee, to those in sorrow  
Comes to bid a sweet good-morrow 380  
To the rough year just awake  
In its cradle on the brake.  
The brightest hour of unborn Spring  
Through the winter wandering,  
Found, it seems, the halcyon morn 385  
To hoar February born ;  
Bending from heaven, in azure mirth,  
It kiss'd the forehead of the earth,  
And smiled upon the silent sea,  
And bade the frozen streams be free, 390  
And waked to music all their fountains,  
And breathed upon the frozen mountains,  
And like a prophetess of May  
Strew'd flowers upon the barren way,  
Making the wintry world appear 395  
Like one on whom thou smilest, dear.

Away, away, from men and towns,  
To the wild wood and the downs —  
To the silent wilderness  
Where the soul need not repress 400  
Its music, lest it should not find  
An echo in another's mind,  
While the touch of Nature's art  
Harmonizes heart to heart.

Radiant Sister of the Day 405  
Awake ! arise ! and come away !

To the wild woods and the plains,  
To the pools where winter rains  
Image all their roof of leaves,  
Where the pine its garland weaves 410  
Of sapless green, and ivy dun,  
Round stems that never kiss the sun ;  
Where the lawns and pastures be  
And the sandhills of the sea ;  
Where the melting hoar-frost wets 415  
The daisy-star that never sets,  
And wind-flowers and violets  
Which yet join not scent to hue  
Crown the pale year weak and new ;  
When the night is left behind 420  
In the deep east, dim and blind,  
And the blue noon is over us,  
And the multitudinous  
Billows murmur at our feet,  
Where the earth and ocean meet, 425  
And all things seem only one  
In the universal Sun.

## XII

## THE RECOLLECTION

Now the last day of many days  
All beautiful and bright as thou,  
The loveliest and the last, is dead : 430  
Rise, Memory, and write its praise !  
Up — to thy wonted work ! come, trace

The epitaph of glory fled,  
For now the earth has changed its face,  
A frown is on the heaven's brow. 435

We wander'd to the Pine Forest  
That skirts the Ocean's foam ;  
The lightest wind was in its nest,  
The tempest in its home.  
The whispering waves were half asleep, 440  
The clouds were gone to play,  
And on the bosom of the deep  
The smile of heaven lay ;  
It seem'd as if the hour were one  
Sent from beyond the skies 445  
Which scatter'd from above the sun  
A light of Paradise !

We paused amid the pines that stood  
The giants of the waste,  
Tortured by storms to shapes as rude 450  
As serpents interlaced, —  
And soothed by every azure breath  
That under heaven is blown,  
To harmonies and hues beneath,  
As tender as its own : 455  
Now all the tree-tops lay asleep  
Like green waves on the sea,  
As still as in the silent deep  
The ocean-woods may be.

How calm it was !— The silence there 460  
By such a chain was bound,

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Than any spreading there.  
There lay the glade and neighbouring lawn,  
And through the dark-green wood  
The white sun twinkling like the dawn  
Out of a speckled cloud. 495  
Sweet views which in our world above  
Can never well be seen  
Were imaged in the water's love  
Of that fair forest green :  
And all was interfused beneath 500  
With an Elysian glow,  
An atmosphere without a breath,  
A softer day below.  
Like one beloved, the scene had lent  
To the dark water's breast 505  
Its every leaf and lineament  
With more than truth exprest ;  
Until an envious wind crept by,  
Like an unwelcome thought  
Which from the mind's too faithful eye 510  
Blots one dear image out.  
— Though thou art ever fair and kind,  
The forests ever green,  
Less oft is peace in Shelley's mind  
Than calm in waters seen ! 515

## XIII

## TO THE MOON

Art thou pale for weariness  
Of climbing heaven, and gazing on the earth,  
Wandering companionless  
Among the stars that have a different birth, —  
And ever-changing, like a joyless eye 520  
That finds no object worth its constancy?

## XIV

## A DREAM OF THE UNKNOWN

I dream'd that as I wander'd by the way  
Bare Winter suddenly was changed to Spring,  
And gentle odours led my steps astray,  
Mix'd with a sound of waters murmuring 525  
Along a shelving bank of turf, which lay  
Under a copse, and hardly dared to fling  
Its green arms round the bosom of the stream,  
But kiss'd it and then fled, as 'Thou mightest in dream.

There grew pied wind-flowers and violets, 530  
Daisies, those pearl'd Arcturi of the earth,  
The constellated flower that never sets;  
Faint oxlips; tender blue-bells, at whose birth  
The sod scarce heaved; and that tall flower that wets

Its mother's face with heaven-collected tears, 535  
When the low wind, its playmate's voice, it hears.

And in the warm hedge grew lush eglantine,  
Green cow-bind and the moonlight-colour'd May,  
And cherry-blossoms, and white cups, whose wine  
Was the bright dew yet drain'd not by the day ; 540  
And wild roses, and ivy serpentine  
With its dark buds and leaves, wandering astray ;  
And flowers azure, black, and streak'd with gold,  
Fairer than any waken'd eyes behold.

And nearer to the river's trembling edge 545  
There grew broad flag-flowers, purple prank'd with  
white,  
And starry river-buds among the sedge,  
And floating water-lilies, broad and bright,  
Which lit the oak that overhung the hedge  
With moonlight beams of their own watery light ; 550  
And bulrushes, and reeds of such deep green  
As soothed the dazzled eye with sober sheen.

Methought that of these visionary flowers  
I made a nosegay, bound in such a way  
That the same hues, which in their natural bowers 555  
Were mingled or opposed, the like array  
Kept these imprison'd children of the Hours  
Within my hand, — and then, elate and gay,  
I hasten'd to the spot whence I had come  
That I might there present it — O ! to Whom ? 560

## XV

## WRITTEN AMONG THE EUGANEAN HILLS

Many a green isle needs must be  
In the deep wide sea of Misery,  
Or the mariner, worn and wan,  
Never thus could voyage on  
Day and night, and night and day, 565  
Drifting on his dreary way,  
With the solid darkness black  
Closing round his vessel's track;  
Whilst above, the sunless sky  
Big with clouds, hangs heavily, 570  
And behind the tempest fleet  
Hurries on with lightning feet,  
Riving sail, and cord, and plank,  
Till the ship has almost drank  
Death from the o'er-brimming deep; 575  
And sinks down, down, like that sleep  
When the dreamer seems to be  
Weltering through eternity;  
And the dim low line before  
Of a dark and distant shore 580  
Still recedes, as ever still  
Longing with divided will,  
But no power to seek or shun,  
He is ever drifted on  
O'er the unreposing wave, 585  
To the haven of the grave.

Ah, many flowering islands lie  
In the waters of wide Agony :  
To such a one this morn was led  
My bark, by soft winds piloted. 590  
— 'Mid the mountains Euganean  
I stood listening to the pæan<sup>1</sup>  
With which the legion'd rooks did hail  
The Sun's uprise majestic :  
Gathering round with wings all hoar, 595  
Through the dewy mist they soar  
Like gray shades, till the eastern heaven  
Bursts ; and then,— as clouds of even  
Fleck'd with fire and azure, lie  
In the unfathomable sky, — 600  
So their plumes of purple grain  
Starr'd with drops of golden rain  
Gleam above the sunlight woods,  
As in silent multitudes  
On the morning's fitful gale 605  
Through the broken mist they sail ;  
And the vapours cloven and gleaming  
Follow down the dark steep streaming,  
Till all is bright, and clear, and still  
Round the solitary hill. 610

Beneath is spread like a green sea  
The waveless plain of Lombardy,  
Bounded by the vaporous air,  
Islanded by cities fair ;

<sup>1</sup> Triumphant hymn.



Underneath Day's azure eyes, 615  
Ocean's nursling, Venice lies,—  
A peopled labyrinth of walls,  
Amphitrite's destined halls,  
Which her hoary sire now paves  
With his blue and beaming waves. 620  
Lo! the sun upsprings behind,  
Broad, red, radiant, half-reclined  
On the level quivering line  
Of the waters crystalline ;  
And before that chasm of light, 625  
As within a furnace bright,  
Column, tower, and dome, and spire,  
Shine like obelisks of fire,  
Pointing with inconstant motion  
From the altar of dark ocean 630  
To the sapphire-tinted skies ;  
As the flames of sacrifice  
From the marble shrines did rise  
As to pierce the dome of gold  
Where Apollo spoke of old. 635

Sun-girt City ! thou hast been  
Ocean's child, and then his queen ;  
Now is come a darker day,  
And thou soon must be his prey,  
If the power that raised thee here 640  
Hallow so thy watery bier.  
A less drear ruin than than now,  
With thy conquest-branded brow

Stooping to the slave of slaves  
From thy throne among the waves 645  
Wilt thou be, — when the sea-mew  
Flies, as once before it flew,  
O'er thine isles depopulate,  
And all is in its ancient state,  
Save where many a palace-gate 650  
With green sea flowers overgrown  
Like a rock of ocean's own,  
Topples o'er the abandon'd sea  
As the tides change sullenly.  
The fisher on his watery way 655  
Wandering at the close of day,  
Will spread his sail and seize his oar  
Till he pass the gloomy shore,  
Lest thy dead should, from their sleep,  
Bursting o'er the starlight deep, 660  
Lead a rapid masque of death  
O'er the waters of his path.

Noon descends around me now :  
'Tis the noon of autumn's glow,  
When a soft and purple mist 665  
Like a vaporous amethyst,  
Or an air-dissolvéd star  
Mingling light and fragrance, far  
From the curved horizon's bound  
To the point of heaven's profound, 670  
Fills the overflowing sky ;  
And the plains that silent lie

Underneath ; the leaves unsodden  
Where the infant Frost has trodden  
With his morning-wingéd feet 675  
Whose bright print is gleaming yet ;  
And the red and golden vines  
Piercing with their trellised lines  
The rough, dark-skirted wilderness ;  
The dun and bladed grass no less, 680  
Pointing from this hoary tower  
In the windless air ; the flower  
Glimmering at my feet ; the line  
Of the olive-sandall'd Apennine  
In the south dimly islanded ; 685  
And the Alps, whose snows are spread  
High between the clouds and sun ;  
And of living things each one ;  
And my spirit, which so long  
Darken'd this swift stream of song, — 690  
Interpenetrated lie  
By the glory of the sky ;  
Be it love, light, harmony,  
Odour, or the soul of all  
Which from heaven like dew doth fall, 695  
Or the mind which feeds this verse,  
Peopling the lone universe.

Noon descends, and after noon  
Autumn's evening meets me soon,  
Leading the infantine moon 700  
And that one star, which to her

Almost seems to minister  
 Half the crimson light she brings  
 From the sunset's radiant springs :  
 And the soft dreams of the morn 705  
 (Which like wingéd winds had borne  
 To that silent isle, which lies  
 'Mid remember'd agonies,  
 The frail bark of this lone being),  
 Pass, to other sufferers fleeing, 710  
 And its ancient pilot, Pain,  
 Sits beside the helm again.

Other flowering isles must be  
 In the sea of Life and Agony :  
 Other spirits float and flee 715  
 O'er that gulf : Ev'n now, perhaps,  
 On some rock the wild wave wraps,  
 With folded wings they waiting sit  
 For my bark, to pilot it  
 To some calm and blooming cove ; 720  
 Where for me, and those I love,  
 May a windless bower be built,  
 Far from passion, pain, and guilt,  
 In a dell 'mid lawny hills  
 Which the wild sea-murmur fills, 725  
 And soft sunshine, and the sound  
 Of old forests echoing round,  
 And the light and smell divine  
 Of all flowers that breathe and shine,  
 — We may live so happy there, 730

That the Spirits of the Air  
Envyng us, may ev'n entice  
To our healing paradise  
The polluting multitude :  
But their rage would be subdued 735  
By that clime divine and calm,  
And the winds whose wings rain balm  
On the uplifted soul, and leaves  
Under which the bright sea heaves ;  
While each breathless interval 740  
In their whisperings musical  
The inspired soul supplies  
With its own deep melodies ;  
And the Love which heals all strife  
Circling, like the breath of life, 745  
All things in that sweet abode  
With its own mild brotherhood :—  
They, not it, would change ; and soon  
Every sprite beneath the moon  
Would repent its envy vain, 750  
And the Earth grow young again.

## XVI

## ODE TO THE WEST WIND

O wild West Wind, thou breath of Autumn's being,  
Thou, from whose unseen presence the leaves dead  
Are driven, like ghosts from an enchanter fleeing,  
Yellow, and black, and pale, and hectic red, 755



Pestilence-stricken multitudes! O thou  
 Who chariotest to their dark wintry bed  
 The wingéd seeds, where they lie cold and low,  
 Each like a corpse within its grave, until  
 Thine azure sister of the Spring shall blow 760  
 Her clarion o'er the dreaming earth, and fill  
 (Driving sweet buds like flocks to feed in air)  
 With living hues and odours plain and hill:  
 Wild Spirit, which art moving everywhere;  
 Destroyer and Preserver; Hear, oh hear! 765

'Thou on whose stream, 'mid the steep sky's commo-  
 tion,  
 Loose clouds like earth's decaying leaves are shed,  
 Shook from the tangled boughs of heaven and ocean,  
 Angels of rain and lightning! there are spread  
 On the blue surface of thine airy surge, 770  
 Like the bright hair uplifted from the head  
 Of some fierce Maenad, ev'n from the dim verge  
 Of the horizon to the zenith's height —  
 The locks of the approaching storm. Thou dirge  
 Of the dying year, to which this closing night 775  
 Will be the dome of a vast sepulchre,  
 Vaulted with all thy congregated might  
 Of vapours, from whose solid atmosphere  
 Black rain, and fire, and hail, will burst: Oh hear!

Thou who didst waken from his summer-dreams 780  
 The blue Mediterranean, where he lay,  
 Lull'd by the coil of his crystalline streams,

Beside a pumice isle in Baiae's bay,  
And saw in sleep old palaces and towers  
Quivering within the wave's intenser day, 785  
All overgrown with azure moss, and flowers  
So sweet, the sense faints picturing them ! Thou  
For whose path the Atlantic's level powers  
Cleave themselves into chasms, while far below  
The sea-blooms and the oozy woods which wear 790  
The sapless foliage of the ocean, know  
Thy voice, and suddenly grow grey with fear  
And tremble and despoil themselves : Oh hear !

If I were a dead leaf thou mightest bear ;  
If I were a swift cloud to fly with thee ; 795  
A wave to pant beneath thy power, and share  
The impulse of thy strength, only less free  
Than Thou, O uncontrollable ! If even  
I were as in my boyhood, and could be  
The comrade of thy wanderings over heaven, 800  
As then, when to outstrip thy skiey speed  
Scarce seem'd a vision, — I would ne'er have striven  
As thus with thee in prayer in my sore need.  
Oh ! lift me as a wave, a leaf, a cloud !  
I fall upon the thorns of life ! I bleed ! 805  
A heavy weight of hours has chain'd and bow'd  
One too like thee — tameless, and swift, and proud.

Make me thy lyre, ev'n as the forest is :  
What if my leaves are falling like its own !  
The tumult of thy mighty harmonies 810

Will take from both a deep autumnal tone,  
 Sweet though in sadness. Be thou, Spirit fierce,  
 My spirit! be thou me, impetuous one!  
 Drive my dead thoughts over the universe,  
 Like wither'd leaves, to quicken a new birth; 815  
 And, by the incantation of this verse,  
 Scatter, as from an unextinguish'd hearth  
 Ashes and sparks, my words among mankind!  
 Be through my lips to unwarpen'd earth  
 The trumpet of a prophecy! O Wind, 820  
 If Winter comes, can Spring be far behind?

## XVII

## THE POET'S DREAM

On a Poet's lips I slept  
 Dreaming like a love-adept  
 In the sound his breathing kept;  
 Nor seeks nor finds he mortal blisses, 825  
 But feeds on the ærial kisses  
 Of shapes that haunt Thought's wildernesses.  
 He will watch from dawn to gloom  
 The lake-reflected sun illumine  
 The yellow bees in the ivy-bloom, 830  
 Nor heed nor see what things they be —  
 But from these create he can  
 Forms more real than living Man,  
 Nurslings of Immortality!

## XVIII

## A DIRGE

Rough wind, that moanest loud 835  
Grief too sad for song ;  
Wild wind, when sullen cloud  
Knells all the night long ;  
Sad storm whose tears are vain,  
Bare woods whose branches stain, 840  
Deep caves and dreary main, —  
Wail for the world's wrong !

## XIX

## THRENOS

O World ! O Life ! O Time !  
On whose last steps I climb,  
Trembling at that where I had stood before ; 845  
When will return the glory of your prime ?  
No more — Oh, never more !  
Out of the day and night  
A joy has taken flight :  
Fresh spring, and summer, and winter hoar 850  
Move my faint heart with grief, but with delight  
No more — Oh, never more !

## XX

Music, when soft voices die,  
Vibrates in the memory —

Odours, when sweet violets sicken,  
Live within the sense they quicken.

855

Rose leaves, when the rose is dead,  
Are heap'd for the beloved's bed ;  
And so thy thoughts, when Thou art gone,  
Love itself shall slumber on.

860



## JOHN KEATS

### I. LIFE

To die an Immortal, at the age of twenty-five, was the fate of John Keats. He was the eldest son of Thomas Keats, head ostler in a livery stable, who had married his employer's daughter, Elizabeth Jennings, and risen to be manager of the Swan-and-Hoop, Finsbury Pavement, London. The poet's birth at this stable, on either the 29th or the 31st of October, 1795, is of almost Biblical dignity.

His parents, who were not without means, energy, and natural gifts, had ambitions for their son. Harrow being somewhat beyond them, they sent him to a good and pleasant school kept by the Reverend John Clarke at Enfield. Soon after, in 1804, Thomas Keats, riding home at night, fell from his horse and was killed. The widow, after an unhappy second marriage and speedy separation, made a home for herself and her children at Edmonton. Here, and at the Enfield school, Keats passed a pleasant boyhood. Through the holidays he played in the brooks, caught small fishes and kept them alive in tubs, and was, as he said long afterward, very fond "of Goldfishes, Tom-tits, Minnows, Mice, Ticklebacks, Dace, Cock Sal-

mons, and all the whole tribe of the Bushes and the Brooks." At school he was a leader, distinguished by his good looks, good nature, and love of battles. He fought both with and for his younger, bigger brother George, and the two joined forces to protect their frail junior, Tom. A schoolmate thus remembered the poet: "Keats was in childhood not attached to books. His *penchant* was for fighting. He would fight any one — morning, noon, and night, his brother among the rest. It was meat and drink to him. . . . His favourites were few; after they were known to fight readily he seemed to prefer them for a sort of grotesque and buffoon humour. . . . He was a boy whom any one from his extraordinary vivacity and personal beauty might easily fancy would become great — but rather in some military capacity than in literature. . . . In all active exercises he excelled." The same schoolmate, after speaking of his "daring," his "violence and vehemence . . . pugnacity and generosity . . . passions of tears or outrageous fits of laughter" — said that "associated as they were with an extraordinary beauty of person and expression, these qualities captivated the boys, and no one was more popular."

In his fourteenth year, this "favourite of all," this "pet prize-fighter" with his "terrier courage," suddenly bent all his forces to the study of books, won all the literature prizes, and of his own free will began to translate the whole *Æneid*. His lifelong friend, the master's son, Charles Cowden Clarke, recalled him as reading even at supper, "sitting back on the form from

the table, holding the folio volume of Burnet's *History of his Own Time* between himself and the table, eating his meal from beyond it." Greek mythology, the beauty of ancient fable, became his long study and deep delight.

In the winter of 1810, however, his mother died. Keats had "sat up whole nights with her in a great chair, would suffer nobody to give her medicine, or even to cook her food, but himself"; and after her death "gave way to such impassioned and prolonged grief (hiding himself in a nook under the master's desk) as awakened the liveliest pity and sympathy in all who saw him." His guardians, a merchant and a tea-dealer, soon decided that he had been long enough at school; and when he was fifteen years old, withdrawing him from Enfield, bound him as apprentice to a surgeon, a Mr. Hammond, at Edmonton. Till the autumn of 1814, Keats studied with this surgeon, drove with him, and held his horse; but a quarrel ended their relation, and the apprentice, released, went in his nineteenth year to London. He continued to study his profession, passed with credit as licentiate at Apothecaries' Hall, and on March 3, 1816, was appointed a dresser under a Mr. Lucas, surgeon at Guy's Hospital. He showed both knowledge and skill. In the arbour at Enfield, however, Cowden Clarke had opened for him not only Spenser's enchanted book, but all those western islands "that bards in fealty to Apollo hold." To Cowden Clarke, in 1815, Keats had given the two sonnets, *Written on the day that Mr. Leigh Hunt left*



*Prison*, and *On First Looking into Chapman's Homer*. And now Keats, living with his brothers — like poor Susan's thrush, in "the vale of Cheapside" — was haunted more and more by aspirations. "The other day, during the lecture," he said, "there came a sunbeam into the room, and with it a whole troop of creatures floating in the ray, and I was off with them to Oberon and fairyland." The falsity of the situation weighed on him, — that a poet's mind should direct a surgeon's hand. "My last operation was the opening of a man's temporal artery. I did it with the utmost nicety, but reflecting on what passed through my mind at the time, my dexterity seemed a miracle, and I never took up the lancet again." He was becoming friends with many young men of literary bent, — George Mathew, Newmarch, Reynolds, the painter Haydon, Joseph Severn, a struggling student of art, Leigh Hunt, the Liberal editor and poet, and — in the spring of 1817 — Shelley. In that same fortunate spring, Keats chose his career, and gave the world his first volume of poems.

Popularly, the book was not successful, for in the public splendour of Thomas Moore, Scott, and Byron, this newcomer was lost. Published in March, his volume had already stopped selling, when Keats, in April, settled at the Isle of Wight. Not at all disheartened, he wrote from Carisbrooke: "I find I cannot do without poetry — without eternal poetry; half the day will not do — the whole of it. . . . I had become all in a tremble from not having written anything of late. . . .

I shall forthwith begin my *Endymion*." Wandering from the Isle of Wight to Margate and to Canterbury, and afterward joining his brothers in lodgings at Hampstead, he not only worked at *Endymion*, visited Leigh Hunt in the Vale of Health, and made friends of Dilke, Charles Brown, and Bailey, but defeated in a good, stand-up fight a ruffianly young butcher who was caught tormenting a cat. For a few weeks, in the winter of 1817-18, he wrote dramatic criticisms for the *Champion*. He now began to see more of people, and to dine out, though he never cared for "fashionables," for wits "all alike," who "say things which make one start without making one feel." He was more at ease in such a company as gathered in Haydon's studio at the "immortal dinner" on December 28, 1817, where "Wordsworth's fine intonation as he quoted Milton and Virgil, Keats's eager inspired look, Lamb's quaint sparkle of lambent humour . . . speeded the conversation." In conversation, however, Keats did not shine, except fitfully. Sometimes he delighted his friends by chanting verses "in his low tremulous undertone"; sometimes made them laugh with clever but kindly mimicry; more often he stayed apart in the window-seat, listening, or with his golden-brown head sunk in thought.

In the winter of 1818 he saw much of Hunt, and something of Shelley, with both of whom he competed in writing a sonnet on the River Nile. Meantime, he was writing *Isabella*, the lines on Robin Hood, and the sonnets beginning "Chief of organic numbers" — "O



golden-tongued Romance " — and " When I have fears that I may cease to be." In the spring appeared his first great work, *Endymion*. The preface to this poem will show that Keats — like Shakespeare, "desiring this man's art and that man's scope" — had both true ambition and true modesty. "It is just," he wrote, "that this youngster (*Endymion*) should die away; a sad thought for me, if I had not some hope that while it is dwindling I may be plotting and fitting myself for verses fit to live."

When he made this brave announcement, Keats had barely three years of life before him. You have now read the story of his happy years; we shall not dwell on the unhappy. By the end of June, 1818, his brother George had married and emigrated to America; by early December, Tom Keats, the youngest and frailest of the three, was released by death, after a long suffering which the poet had outwatched with heroic tenderness. In the meantime, through July, Charles Brown had taken Keats on a walking tour through Scotland, — a fatal tour: the sombre North chilled and rebuked the poet's genius; hardship and exposure broke his health, and sowed mortal seeds. The brutal critics of *Blackwood's* and the *Quarterly* — who cried out "back to the shop, Mr. John, stick to plasters, pills, ointment boxes," and who called his poetry "calm, settled, . . . drivelling idiocy" — were attacking a foredoomed man. When Keats met Coleridge by chance in a Highgate lane, the truth was already perceptible. "After he had left us a little way," wrote the great,

dark poet of the supernatural, "he ran back and said, 'Let me carry away the memory, Coleridge, of having pressed your hand.' 'There is death in that hand,' I said, when Keats was gone."

The hand spoke truly, for in this brave and beautiful spirit, death and immortality now contended. And to the fever of this conflict, after his meeting with Fanny Brawne in 1818, was added the hopeless love of a man without health and without prospects. But even in sickness and distress, his genius continued to flame. In January, 1819, he finished *The Eve of St. Agnes*, and began *The Eve of St. Mark*; in February, the odes *On Indolence* and *On a Grecian Urn*, and the lines which begin "Bards of passion and of mirth"; by April 15, the ode *To Psyche*. A few days later he found that a nightingale was building her nest in Brown's garden. "Keats felt," said Brown, "a tranquil and continual joy in her song; and one morning he took his chair from the breakfast table to the grass-plot under a plum, where he sat for two or three hours. When he came into the house, I perceived he had some scraps of paper in his hand, and these he was quietly thrusting behind the books. On inquiry, I found those scraps, four or five in number, contained his poetic feeling on the song of our nightingale. The writing was not well legible; and it was difficult to arrange the stanzas on so many scraps. With his assistance I succeeded, and this was his *Ode to a Nightingale*." At about this time Keats had finished *Hyperion*; in the same spring or the following summer, he wrote *La Belle Dame sans Merci*;

and in the autumn, during the "last good days of his life," composed *Lamia*, the tragedy of *Otho*, and his last ode, *To Autumn*. The list closes with two fragments, the *Cap and Bells* and the *Vision*, and with the sonnet written on board ship in his last voyage, — *Bright star, would I were as steadfast as thou art*.

What remains you can best learn from his friends' words and his own. One bitterly cold night, February 3, 1820, Keats came home to Brown's house in a high fever. "I entered his chamber," said Brown, "as he leapt into bed. On entering the cold sheets, before his head was on the pillow, he slightly coughed, and I heard him say, — 'That is blood from my mouth.' . . . He was examining a single drop of blood upon the sheet. 'Bring me the candle, Brown, and let me see this blood.' After regarding it steadfastly, he looked up in my face, with a calmness of countenance that I can never forget, and said, — 'I know the colour of that blood; — it is arterial blood; — I cannot be deceived in that colour; — that drop of blood is my death-warrant; — I must die.' "

With a surgeon's knowledge of his case, and a lover's despair, Keats accepted it manfully, and, on the whole, cheerfully. He wrote of himself: "For six months before I was taken ill I had not passed a tranquil day. Either that gloom overspread me, or I was suffering under some passionate feeling." But now, lying in bed, he thought "of green fields," and perceived "how astonishingly does the chance of leaving the world impress a sense of its natural beauties upon us!" That



chance drew near so rapidly that on September 18, 1820, he said farewell to many loving friends, and sailed for Naples with one devoted companion, Joseph Severn. In his anguish at leaving Fanny Brawne, he wrote to Brown from Italy: "I can bear to die — I cannot bear to leave her. . . . Oh God! . . . Everything I have in my trunks that reminds me of her goes through me like a spear. The silk lining she put in my travelling cap scalds my head. . . . I see her — I hear her. . . . Oh, Brown, I have coals of fire in my breast. It surprises me that the human heart is capable of containing and bearing so much misery." But by degrees, as he lay dying at Rome, these intolerable pangs left him. Though he could not wholly believe, the kindness of the devoted Severn, a true man and noble Christian, helped his unbelief. "Poor Keats," wrote Severn, "has me ever by him, and shadows out the form of one solitary friend: he opens his eyes in great doubt and horror, but when they fall on me they close gently, open quietly and close again, till he sinks to sleep." — "Doctor," he asked patiently, "when will this posthumous life of mine come to an end?" And again he said — "I feel the flowers growing over me." On February 23, 1821, "about four," Severn has told us, "the approaches of death came on. 'Severn — I — lift me up — I am dying — I shall die easy; don't be frightened — be firm, and thank God it has come.'"

Keats was buried — as both Shelley and Severn were afterward — in the Protestant cemetery at Rome, near the pyramid of Caius Cestius.

## II. POEMS

“I hope,” said Keats, in his preface to *Endymion*, “I hope I have not in too late a day touched the beautiful mythology of Greece, and dulled its brightness.” When you have read that poem, and his later *Hyperion*, you may judge for yourselves whether in his hands the beauties of Greek fable became any less bright. Lovers of Keats think not; and some, too zealous in his praise, have called Keats a poet of Greek life, and his spirit the Greek spirit. It is true that in the *Ode to Autumn* the imagery, the vivid, beautiful personification of that mellow season, is thoroughly pagan : —

“Who hath not seen thee oft amid thy store?  
 Sometimes whoever seeks abroad may find  
 Thee sitting careless on a granary floor,  
 Thy hair soft-lifted by the winnowing wind;  
 Or on a half-reap’d furrow sound asleep,  
 Drowsed with the fume of poppies, while thy hook  
 Spares the next swath and all its twined flowers:  
 And sometimes like a gleaner thou dost keep  
 Steady thy laden head across a brook:  
 Or by a cyder-press, with patient look,  
 Thou watchest the last oozings, hours by hours.”

This is from the last great poem which Keats wrote; and in one of his earliest you will find a beautiful passage which begins —

“Queen of the wide air; thou most lovely queen,”  
 and which describes the bridal night of Cynthia, goddess of the moon. In many other instances, the moon in



this poet's sky is not the pale weary satellite that Shelley watched and questioned, but the mystic form of Selene, as figured by the Greeks. Forces of nature Keats loved to think of as mythical beings, half human, half divine, like the daughter of Hyperion, when —

“One hand she press'd upon that aching spot  
Where beats the human heart, as if just there  
Though an immortal, she felt cruel pain.”

Yet you should remember that Keats, though he employed these figures of pagan speech, did not actually people his world with them, but used them as adornments. He is a Greek in his power to speak out freely all that is in him, whether it be simple or complex, new or old. The mythology of Hellas was to him always a wonder and a delight. But Keats was also, in the depths of his genius, a romantic poet who studied and recalled the beauties of Elizabethan fancy, and whose tales move through the enchanted forest of the Faery Queen.

“Poetry,” he once wrote, “must surprise by a fine excess.” The poet should be —

“Filling every sense with spiritual sweets,  
As bees gorge full their cells.”

This fine excess Keats drew not only from classic and mediæval story, but even more from nature, from his own outdoor world in England. Like Shakespeare, he was always one to

“ . . . watch intently Nature's gentle doings.”

For this reason, because his mood was not that of a teacher or moralist but of a loving observer, Keats was

able to surprise and waylay those half-hidden bits of magic, in tranquillity or change, those little mysteries among the leaves, which most of us live and die without seeing.

“ Here are sweet peas, on tiptoe for a flight :  
With wings of gentle flush o’er delicate white,  
And taper fingers catching at all things,  
To bind them all about with tiny rings.”

Beside a brook he sees the minnows —

“ . . . how they ever wrestle  
With their own sweet delight, and ever nestle  
Their silver bellies on the pebbly sand.”

Behind the life which is in all these things, Keats rarely, if ever, suggests the presence — so real and so full of awe to Wordsworth — of a mighty impulse and everlasting purpose. Keats wanders afield, to “enjoy delight with liberty.” In his early poems, the liberty is almost too roving, the beauty of details excessive ; so that his friend Leigh Hunt was not unjust in accusing him of a “tendency to notice everything too indiscriminately, and without an eye to natural proportion and effect.” In his narrative poems, the story often becomes tangled in flowery thickets ; the foreground, though rich and lovely, has no great gaps through which the imagination may see into the distance ; and the persons of his tale pause in some luxuriant place without activity or passion to make them dramatic. But these faults belonged to the poet’s youth, and had left him, or were leaving him, when his power and his life were cut short. The poems in this book are not Keats’s first wayward

attempts ; they show how perfectly this spirit of liberty and delight had learned to select and to simplify, and without hovering too fondly over an image of beauty, to record it in happy words that linger and haunt.

With this felicity of language — often compared to Shakespeare's — Keats brings generous tribute to the great poets dead and gone, the “bards of passion and of mirth.” The *Ode on the Poets*, the sonnet *On First Looking into Chapman's Homer*, and the *Lines on the Mermaid Tavern* are the golden coins with which Keats pays his reckoning and takes his seat among the glorious company, — true coin of the realm, stamped with Apollo's countenance. *La Belle Dame sans Merci*, containing, in the compass of a short ballad, all the dark beauty of mediæval fairyland and the obscure terror of warning dreams, conveys in elfin music the power with which Beauty, in all ages, holds her unrequited slaves. In the odes, *To Autumn*, *To a Nightingale*, and *On a Grecian Urn*, you will discover that odes, to be among the greatest in our language, need not follow tradition so far as to be declamatory or set above the pitch of ordinary music. These are quiet, meditative, with a kind of halcyon, autumnal beauty. There are no flights, pauses, and sudden swerves, no merely rhetorical fire, no changes from trumpet to flute, from lyre to sounding brass or full organ, such as Dryden used in *Alexander's Feast*. The music of Keats maintains an even tenor, or sinks as

“ . . . in a wailful choir the small gnats mourn  
Among the river salallows.”

His odes open with no sweeping invocations, but with a minor melody which at first seems hardly more audible than a thought : —

“Thou still unravish’d bride of quietness,  
Thou foster-child of silence and slow time.”

It is this tranquillity of tone and of mood that allows Keats, unhurried by the changing rush and flow of the usual ode, to give in complete stanzas his clear and immortal pictures. Never has an ode contained a more vivid passage of description than his on the Grecian Urn : —

“Who are these coming to the sacrifice?  
To what green altar, O mysterious priest,  
Lead’st thou that heifer lowing at the skies,  
And all her silken flanks in garlands drest?  
What little town by river or sea shore  
Or mountain-built with peaceful citadel,  
Is emptied of this folk, this pious morn?  
And, little town, thy streets for evermore  
Will silent be; and not a soul to tell  
Why thou art desolate, can e’er return.”

When later you come to know the whole range of Keats’s poetry, you will see in the odes a growing melancholy, a sense, unknown in his earlier delighted freedom, that beauty is transient, that all living forms of beauty pass into oblivion. Keats came to feel that —

“ . . . in the very temple of Dèlight  
Veil’d Melancholy has her sovran shrine.”

The author of the sonnets beginning “When I have



fears that I shall cease to be," and "Bright star, would I were steadfast as thou art," had all too much reason to reflect on the brevity of life and the certainty of death. In his last days Keats wrote: "If I should die, I have left no immortal work behind me — nothing to make my friends proud of my memory; but I have loved the principle of beauty in all things, and if I had had time, I would have made myself remembered." The great web of Keats's poetry was rent across when he was merely beginning, merely emerging from the style of youth into the chastened style of manhood, to see that great verse cannot be written luxuriously. "English," he said, two years before his death, "ought to be kept up." He saw, in other words, that "the false beauty proceeding from art" must give way to "the true voice of feeling." In his short poems this transformation had already come. Keats's longer poems were still to be written. But without these, in his brief span, with dignity, tenderness, and glory, he had told the world —

"‘Beauty is truth, truth beauty,’ — that is all  
Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know."

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## SELECTIONS FROM KEATS

	PAGE
ODE ON THE POETS . . . . .	225
ON FIRST LOOKING INTO CHAPMAN'S HOMER . . . . .	226
HAPPY INSENSIBILITY . . . . .	227
LA BELLE DAME SANS MERCI . . . . .	228
BRIGHT STAR! WOULD I WERE STEADFAST AS THOU ART . . . . .	230
THE TERROR OF DEATH . . . . .	231
THE MERMAID TAVERN . . . . .	231
ODE TO A NIGHTINGALE . . . . .	232
TO ONE WHO HAS BEEN LONG IN CITY PENT . . . . .	235
ODE TO AUTUMN . . . . .	236
THE REALM OF FANCY . . . . .	237
ODE ON A GRECIAN URN . . . . .	241
THE HUMAN SEASONS . . . . .	243

## SELECTIONS FROM KEATS

## I

## ODE ON THE POETS

BARDS of Passion and of Mirth  
Ye have left your souls on earth !  
Have ye souls in heaven too,  
Double-lived in regions new ?

— Yes, and those of heaven commune  
With the spheres of sun and moon ;  
With the noise of fountains wond'rous  
And the parle<sup>1</sup> of voices thund'rous ;  
With the whisper of heaven's trees  
And one another, in soft ease  
Seated on Elysian lawns  
Browsed by none but Dian's fawns ;  
Underneath large blue-bells tented,  
Where the daisies are rose-scented,  
And the rose herself has got  
Perfume which on earth is not ;  
Where the nightingale doth sing  
Not a senseless, trancéd thing,

<sup>1</sup> Discourse, parley.

But divine melodious truth ;  
Philosophic numbers smooth ; 20  
Tales and golden histories  
Of heaven and its mysteries.

Thus ye live on high, and then  
On the earth ye live again ;  
And the souls ye left behind you 25  
Teach us, here, the way to find you,  
Where your other souls are joying,  
Never slumber'd never cloying.  
Here, your earth-born souls still speak  
To mortals, of their little week ; 30  
Of their sorrows and delights ;  
Of their passions and their spites ;  
Of their glory and their shame ;  
What doth strengthen and what maim : —  
Thus ye teach us, every day, 35  
Wisdom, though fled far away.

Bards of Passion and of Mirth  
Ye have left your souls on earth !  
Ye have souls in heaven too,  
Double-lived in regions new ! 40

## II

### ON FIRST LOOKING INTO CHAPMAN'S HOMER

Much have I travell'd in the realms of gold  
And many goodly states and kingdoms seen ;  
Round many western islands have I been  
Which bards in fealty to Apollo hold.

Oft of one wide expanse had I been told 45  
That deep-brow'd Homer ruled as his demesne :  
Yet did I never breathe its pure serene  
Till I heard Chapman speak out loud and bold :

— Then felt I like some watcher of the skies  
When a new planet swims into his ken ; 50  
Or like stout Cortez, when with eagle eyes

He stared at the Pacific — and all his men  
Look'd at each other with a wild surmise —  
Silent, upon a peak in Darien.

### III

#### HAPPY INSENSIBILITY

In a drear-nighted December, 55  
Too happy, happy tree,  
Thy branches ne'er remember  
Their green felicity :  
The north cannot undo them  
With a sleety whistle through them, 60  
Nor frozen thawings glue them  
From budding at the prime.

In a drear-nighted December,  
Too happy, happy brook,  
Thy bubblings ne'er remember 65  
Apollo's summer look ;  
But with a sweet forgetting

They stay their crystal fretting,  
 Never, never petting  
 About the frozen time.

70

Ah! would 'twere so with many  
 A gentle girl and boy!  
 But were there ever any  
 Writhed not at passéd joy?  
 To know the change and feel it,  
 When there is none to heal it,  
 Nor numbéd sense to steal it—  
 Was never said in rhyme.

75

## IV

## LA BELLE DAME SANS MERCI

'O what can ail thee, knight-at-arms,  
 Alone and palely loitering?  
 'The sedge has wither'd from the lake,  
 And no birds sing.

80

'O what can ail thee, knight-at-arms!  
 So haggard and so woe-begone?  
 'The squirrel's granary is full,  
 And the harvest's done.

85

'I see a lily on thy brow  
 With anguish moist and fever-dew,  
 And on thy cheeks a fading rose  
 Fast withereth too.'

90



‘ I met a lady in the meads,  
Full beautiful — a faery’s child,  
Her hair was long, her foot was light,  
And her eyes were wild.

‘ I made a garland for her head, 95  
And bracelets too, and fragrant zone;<sup>1</sup>  
She look’d at me as she did love,  
And made sweet moan.

‘ I set her on my pacing steed  
And nothing else saw all day long, 100  
For sidelong would she bend, and sing  
A faery’s song.

‘ She found me roots of relish sweet,  
And honey wild and manna-dew,  
And sure in language strange she said 105  
“ I love thee true.”

‘ She took me to her elfin grot,  
And there she wept and sigh’d full sore;  
And there I shut her wild wild eyes  
With kisses four. 110

‘ And there she lulléd me asleep,  
And there I dream’d — Ah! woe betide!  
The latest dream I ever dream’d  
On the cold hill’s side.

‘ I saw pale kings and princes too, 115  
Pale warriors, death-pale were they all:

<sup>1</sup> Belt.

They cried — “ La belle Dame sans Merci  
Hath thee in thrall ! ”

‘ I saw their starved lips in the gloam  
With horrid warning gapéd wide, 120  
And I awoke and found me here  
On the cold hill’s side.

‘ And this is why I sojourn here  
Alone and palely loitering,  
Though the sedge is wither’d from the lake, 125  
And no birds sing.’

## V

Bright Star ! would I were steadfast as thou art —  
Not in lone splendour hung aloft the night,  
And watching, with eternal lids apart,  
Like Nature’s patient sleepless Eremite,<sup>1</sup> 130

The moving waters at their priestlike task  
Of pure ablution round earth’s human shores,  
Or gazing on the new soft fallen mask  
Of snow upon the mountains and the moors : —

No — yet still steadfast, still unchangeable, 135  
Pillow’d upon my fair Love’s ripening breast  
To feel for ever its soft fall and swell,  
Awake for ever in a sweet unrest ;

Still, still to hear her tender-taken breath,  
And so live ever, — or else swoon to death. 140

<sup>1</sup> Hermit.

## VI

## THE TERROR OF DEATH

When I have fears that I may cease to be  
Before my pen has glean'd my teeming brain,  
Before high-piléd books, in charact'ry  
Hold like rich garners the full-ripen'd grain ;

When I behold, upon the night's starr'd face, 145  
Huge cloudy symbols of a high romance,  
And think that I may never live to trace  
Their shadows, with the magic hand of chance ;

And when I feel, fair Creature of an hour !  
That I shall never look upon thee more, 150  
Never have relish in the faery power  
Of unreflecting love — then on the shore

Of the wide world I stand alone, and think  
Till Love and Fame to nothingness do sink.

## VII

## THE MERMAID TAVERN

Souls of Poets dead and gone, 155  
What Elysium have ye known,  
Happy field or mossy cavern,  
Choicer than the Mermaid Tavern ?  
Have ye tippled drink more fine  
Than mine host's Canary wine ? 160

Or are fruits of Paradise  
 Sweeter than those dainty pies  
 Of venison? O generous food!  
 Drest as though bold Robin Hood  
 Would, with his Maid Marian, 165  
 Sup and bowse<sup>1</sup> from horn and can.

I have heard that on a day  
 Mine host's sign-board flew away  
 Nobody knew whither, till  
 An astrologer's old quill 170  
 To a sheepskin gave the story,  
 Said he saw you in your glory,  
 Underneath a new-old sign  
 Sipping beverage divine,  
 And pledging with contented smack 175  
 The Mermaid in the Zodiac.

Souls of Poets dead and gone,  
 What Elysium have ye known,  
 Happy field or mossy cavern,  
 Choicer than the Mermaid Tavern? 180

## VIII

## ODE TO A NIGHTINGALE

My heart aches, and a drowsy numbness pains  
 My sense, as though of hemlock I had drunk,  
 Or emptied some dull opiate to the drains  
 One minute past, and Lethe-wards had sunk:

<sup>1</sup> Drink.

'Tis not through envy of thy happy lot,  
But being too happy in thine happiness, —  
That thou, light-wingéd Dryad of the trees,  
In some melodious plot  
Of beechen green, and shadows numberless,  
Singest of summer in full-throated ease. 185  
190

O, for a draught of vintage ! that hath been  
Cool'd a long age in the deep-delvéd earth,  
Tasting of Flora and the country green,  
Dance, and Provençal song, and sunburnt mirth !  
O for a beaker full of the warm South, 195  
Full of the true, the blushful Hippocrene,  
With beaded bubbles winking at the brim,  
And purple-stainéd mouth ;  
That I might drink, and leave the world unseen,  
And with thee fade away into the forest dim : 200

Fade far away, dissolve, and quite forget  
What thou among the leaves hast never known,  
The weariness, the fever, and the fret  
Here, where men sit and hear each other groan ;  
Where palsy shakes a few, sad, last grey hairs, 205  
Where youth grows pale, and spectre-thin, and dies ;  
Where but to think is to be full of sorrow  
And leaden-eyed despairs ;  
Where Beauty cannot keep her lustrous eyes,  
Or new Love pine at them beyond to-morrow. 210

Away ! away ! for I will fly to thee,  
Not charioted by Bacchus and his pards,



But on the viewless wings of Poesy,  
 Though the dull brain perplexes and retards :  
 Already with thee ! tender is the night, 215  
 And haply the Queen-Moon is on her throne,  
 Cluster'd around by all her starry Fays ;  
 But here there is no light,  
 Save what from heaven is with the breezes blown  
 Through verdurous glooms and winding mossy  
 ways. 220

I cannot see what flowers are at my feet,  
 Nor what soft incense hangs upon the boughs,  
 But, in embalméd darkness, guess each sweet  
 Wherewith the seasonable month endows  
 The grass, the thicket, and the fruit-tree wild ; 225  
 White hawthorn, and the pastoral eglantine ;  
 Fast fading violets cover'd up in leaves ;  
 And mid-May's eldest child,  
 The coming musk-rose, full of dewy wine,  
 The murmurous haunt of flies on summer eves. 230

Darkling I listen ; and for many a time  
 I have been half in love with easeful Death,  
 Call'd him soft names in many a muséd rhyme,  
 To take into the air my quiet breath ;  
 Now more than ever seems it rich to die, 235  
 To cease upon the midnight with no pain,  
 While thou art pouring forth thy soul abroad  
 In such an ecstasy !  
 Still wouldst thou sing, and I have ears in vain —  
 To thy high requiem become a sod. 240

Thou wast not born for death, immortal Bird !  
 No hungry generations tread thee down ;  
 The voice I hear this passing night was heard  
 In ancient days by emperor and clown :  
 Perhaps the self-same song that found a path 245  
 Through the sad heart of Ruth, when, sick for home,  
 She stood in tears amid the alien corn ;  
 The same that oft-times hath  
 Charm'd magic casements, opening on the foam  
 Of perilous seas, in faery lands forlorn. 250

Forlorn ! the very word is like a bell  
 To toll me back from thee to my sole self !  
 Adieu ! the fancy cannot cheat so well  
 As she is famed to do, deceiving elf.  
 Adieu ! adieu ! thy plaintive anthem fades 255  
 Past the near meadows, over the still stream,  
 Up the hill-side ; and now 'tis buried deep  
 In the next valley-glades :  
 Was it a vision, or a waking dream ?  
 Fled is that music : — Do I wake or sleep ? 260

## IX

To one who has been long in city pent,  
 'Tis very sweet to look into the fair  
 And open face of heaven, — to breathe a prayer  
 Full in the smile of the blue firmament.

Who is more happy, when, with heart's content, 265  
 Fatigued he sinks into some pleasant lair

Of wavy grass, and reads a *debonair*  
And gentle tale of love and languishment?

Returning home at evening, with an ear  
Catching the notes of Philomel, — an eye 270  
Watching the sailing cloudlet's bright career,

He mourns that day so soon has glided by :  
E'en like the passage of an angel's tear  
That falls through the clear ether silently.

## X

## ODE TO AUTUMN

Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness, 275  
Close bosom-friend of the maturing sun ;  
Conspiring with him how to load and bless  
With fruit the vines that round the thatch-eaves run ;  
To bend with apples the moss'd cottage-trees,  
And fill all fruit with ripeness to the core ; 280  
To swell the gourd, and plump the hazel shells  
With a sweet kernel ; to set budding more,  
And still more, later flowers for the bees,  
Until they think warm days will never cease ;  
For Summer has o'erbrimm'd their clammy cells. 285

Who hath not seen thee oft amid thy store ?  
Sometimes whoever seeks abroad may find  
Thee sitting careless on a granary floor,  
Thy hair soft-lifted by the winnowing wind ;

Or on a half-reap'd furrow sound asleep, 290  
Drowsed with the fume of poppies, while thy hook  
Spares the next swath and all its twinéd flowers :  
And sometimes like a gleaner thou dost keep  
Steady thy laden head across a brook :  
Or by a cyder-press, with patient look, 295  
Thou watchest the last oozings, hours by hours.

Where are the songs of Spring ? Ay, where are they ?  
Think not of them, thou hast thy music too, —  
While barréd clouds bloom the soft-dying day  
And touch the stubble-plains with rosy hue ; 300  
Then in a wailful choir the small gnats mourn  
Among the river salallows, borne aloft  
Or sinking as the light wind lives or dies ;  
And full-grown lambs loud bleat from hilly bourn ;  
Hedge-cricketts sing ; and now with treble soft 305  
The red-breast whistles from a garden-croft ;  
And gathering swallows twitter in the skies.

## XI

## THE REALM OF FANCY

Ever let the Fancy roam ;  
Pleasure never is at home :  
At a touch sweet Pleasure melteth, 310  
Like to bubbles when rain pelteth ;  
Then let wingéd Fancy wander  
Through the thought still spread beyond her :

Open wide the mind's cage-door,  
She'll dart forth, and cloudward soar. 315  
O sweet Fancy! let her loose;  
Summer's joys are spoilt by use,  
And the enjoying of the Spring  
Fades as does its blossoming;  
Autumn's red-lipp'd fruitage too, 320  
Blushing through the mist and dew,  
Cloys with tasting: What do then?  
Sit thee by the ingle, when  
The sear faggot blazes bright,  
Spirit of a winter's night; 325  
When the soundless earth is muffled,  
And the cakéd snow is shuffled  
From the ploughboy's heavy shoon;  
When the Night doth meet the Noon  
In a dark conspiracy 330  
To banish Even from her sky.  
Sit thee there, and send abroad,  
With a mind self-overaw'd,  
Fancy, high-commission'd: — send her!  
She has vassals to attend her: 335  
She will bring, in spite of frost,  
Beauties that the earth hath lost;  
She will bring thee, all together,  
All delights of summer weather;  
All the buds and bells of May, 340  
From dewy sward or thorny spray;  
All the heapéd Autumn's wealth,  
With a still, mysterious stealth:



She will mix these pleasures up  
Like three fit wines in a cup, 345  
And thou shalt quaff it : — thou shalt hear  
Distant harvest-carols clear ;  
Rustle of the reaped corn ;  
Sweet birds antheming the morn :  
And, in the same moment — hark ! 350  
'Tis the early April lark,  
Or the rooks, with busy caw,  
Foraging for sticks and straw.  
Thou shalt, at one glance, behold  
The daisy and the marigold ; 355  
White-plumed lilies, and the first  
Hedge-grown primrose that hath burst ;  
Shaded hyacinth, alway  
Sapphire queen of the mid-May ;  
And every leaf, and every flower 360  
Pearled with the self-same shower.  
Thou shalt see the field-mouse peep  
Meagre from its celléd sleep ;  
And the snake all winter-thin  
Cast on sunny bank its skin ; 365  
Freckled nest-eggs thou shalt see  
Hatching in the hawthorn-tree,  
When the hen-bird's wing doth rest  
Quiet on her mossy nest ;  
'Then the hurry and alarm 370  
When the bee-hive casts its swarm ;  
Acorns ripe down-pattering,  
While the autumn breezes sing.

Oh, sweet Fancy! let her loose ;  
Everything is spoilt by use : 375  
Where's the cheek that doth not fade,  
Too much gazed at? Where's the maid  
Whose lip mature is ever new?  
Where's the eye, however blue,  
Doth not weary? Where's the face 380  
One would meet in every place?  
Where's the voice, however soft,  
One would hear so very oft?  
At a touch sweet Pleasure melteth  
Like to bubbles when rain pelteth. 385  
Let then wingéd Fancy find  
Thee a mistress to thy mind :  
Dulcet-eyed as Ceres' daughter,  
Ere the God of Torment taught her  
How to frown and how to chide ; 390  
With a waist and with a side  
White as Hebe's, when her zone  
Slipt its golden clasp, and down  
Fell her kirtle to her feet,  
While she held the goblet sweet, 395  
And Jove grew languid. — Break the mesh  
Of the Fancy's silken leash ;  
Quickly break her prison-string,  
And such joys as these she'll bring.  
— Let the wingéd Fancy roam, 400  
Pleasure never is at home.

## XII

## ODE ON A GRECIAN URN

Thou still unravish'd bride of quietness,  
Thou foster-child of silence and slow time,  
Sylvan historian, who canst thus express  
A flowery tale more sweetly than our rhyme : 405  
What leaf-fringed legend haunts about thy shape  
Of deities or mortals, or of both,  
In Tempé or the dales of Arcady?  
What men or gods are these? What maidens loth?  
What mad pursuit? What struggle to escape? 410  
What pipes and timbrels? What wild ecstasy?

Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard  
Are sweeter; therefore, ye soft pipes, play on;  
Not to the sensual ear, but, more endear'd,  
Pipe to the spirit ditties of no tone : 415  
Fair youth, beneath the trees, thou canst not leave  
Thy song, nor ever can those trees be bare;  
Bold Lover, never, never canst thou kiss,  
Though winning near the goal — yet, do not grieve;  
She cannot fade, though thou hast not thy bliss, 420  
For ever wilt thou love, and she be fair!

Ah, happy, happy boughs! that cannot shed  
Your leaves, nor ever bid the Spring adieu;  
And, happy melodist, unwearied,  
For ever piping songs for ever new; 425

More happy love, more happy, happy love !  
 For ever warm and still to be enjoy'd,  
 For ever panting, and for ever young ;  
 All breathing human passion far above,  
 That leaves a heart high-sorrowful and cloy'd, 430  
 A burning forehead, and a parching tongue.

Who are these coming to the sacrifice ?  
 To what green altar, O mysterious priest.  
 Lead'st thou that heifer lowing at the skies,  
 And all her silken flanks with garlands drest ? 435  
 What little town by river or sea shore,  
 Or mountain-built with peaceful citadel,  
 Is emptied of this folk, this pious morn ?  
 And, little town, thy streets for evermore  
 Will silent be ; and not a soul to tell 440  
 Why thou art desolate, can e'er return.

O Attic shape ! Fair attitude ! with brede <sup>1</sup>  
 Of marble men and maidens overwrought,  
 With forest branches and the trodden weed ;  
 Thou, silent form, dost tease us out of thought 445  
 As doth eternity : Cold Pastoral !  
 When old age shall this generation waste,  
 Thou shalt remain, in midst of other woe  
 Than ours, a friend to man, to whom thou say'st,  
 ' Beauty is truth, truth beauty,' — that is all 450  
 Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know.

<sup>1</sup> Embroidery.

## XIII

## THE HUMAN SEASONS

Four Seasons fill the measure of the year ;  
There are four seasons in the mind of man :  
He has his lusty Spring, when fancy clear  
Takes in all beauty with an easy span : 455

He has his Summer, when luxuriously  
Spring's honey'd cud of youthful thought he loves  
To ruminate, and by such dreaming high  
Is nearest unto heaven : quiet coves

His soul has in its Autumn, when his wings 460  
He furleth close : contented so to look  
On mists in idleness — to let fair things  
Passed by unheeded as a threshold brook.

He has his Winter too of pale misfeature,  
Or else he would forego his mortal nature. 465





## ROBERT BROWNING

### I. LIFE

ROBERT BROWNING, born in Camberwell on May 7, 1812, belonged—like most of the great English poets—to what their countrymen call the middle class. His father was a clerk in the Bank of England, his mother the daughter of William Wiedemann, a German ship-owner who had settled and married at Dundee. Their house, in the London suburb of Camberwell, was a quiet place, as their life was serene and happy. The poet's father, a man of intelligence and refinement, not only possessed such accomplishments as drawing and painting in water-colours, but was a student, a sensible critic, and a lover of books, pictures, and poetry. At dusk, in his library, he used to walk up and down with the little boy in his arms, singing him to sleep with fragments of Anacreon,—the Greek words set to old English tunes. He loved his son greatly. "My dear father," wrote Browning afterwards, "put me in a condition most favourable for the best work I was capable of. When I think of the many authors who have had to fight their way through all sorts of difficulties, I have no reason to be proud of my achievements. . . . He secured for me all the ease and comfort that a literary man needs to do good work. It would have been

shameful if I had not done my best to realize his expectations of me." Of his mother the poet said — "She was a divine woman." To his latest day he could hardly speak of her without tears in his eyes.

His boyhood was quiet and happy. He was an energetic boy, fond not only of books, pictures, and music, but of living things, which he collected in a small menagerie, — speckled frogs, monkeys, owls, hedgehogs. As for books, "the first . . . I ever bought in my life," he tells us, was *Ossian*; and "the first composition I was ever guilty of, was something in imitation of *Ossian*." He wrote early and constantly. "I never can recollect not writing rhymes; . . . but I knew they were nonsense even then." Byron's poetry and fame soon captivated him, and inspired a feeling which he said he "always retained . . . in many respects. . . . I would at any time have gone to Finchley to see a curl of [Byron's] hair or one of his gloves . . . while Heaven knows that I could not get up enthusiasm enough to cross the room if at the other end of it all Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Southey were condensed into the little china bottle yonder." Browning's earliest poems — the unpublished *Incondita*, written at the age of twelve — were a boy's vision of Byronic romance.

Of his days in Mr. Ready's school at Peckham, where he remained till he was fourteen, there is little to say. He was not a schoolboy hero, like Keats. A few facts stand out in this uneventful period. One memorable night, among the elms above Norwood, he saw for the first time the lights of London, and was marvel-

lously affected by the spectacle of that distant, pulsating mystery. No less memorable was the day when, passing a small book-shop, he saw in the window, and bought, a copy of "Mr. Shelley's Atheistical Poem : very scarce." He had never heard of Shelley ; his family could tell him little about that social rebel and exile ; but deep called unto deep, and Browning could not be satisfied until his mother, visiting London, had sent him down a parcel of Shelley's books. By a fortunate chance, she sent also three volumes of a second unknown, John Keats. Often in later life Browning recalled the glory of that May evening when these wonderful books rolled back the boundaries of his world, while two nightingales, in the laburnums and copper-beeches, sang in such rivalry as if they had been the spirits of the two great poets.

If these are the chief events of his boyhood, those of his youth are even fewer. He was not sent to either Oxford or Cambridge, but had private tutors at home, where he learned to ride and fence, to box and dance, to read French, to know more about music than any other English poet, and more about Greek and Italian history and literature than almost any other "man of the world." Man of the world he became, as genuinely as he was poet born. Mrs. Bridell-Fox has told how Browning, at this period of his life, called on her father, and finding him not at home, promptly sat down at the piano to play for her. "He was then slim and dark, and very handsome, and — may I hint it ? — just a trifle of a dandy, addicted to lemon-coloured



kid gloves and such things, quite the glass of fashion and the mould of form. But full of 'ambition,' eager for fame, and what is more, determined to conquer fame and to achieve success." In middle age, and later, he is described by other writers as strong in the shoulder, slender in the waist, "a middle-sized, well set up, erect man, with somewhat emphatic gestures, and . . . a curiously strident voice," — a manly figure, thoughtful face, and conventional bearing. This most novel and unconventional poet was all his life a conventional man. He hated all "Bohemian" irregularity, lived as urbanely as other men, took pleasure in the forms of social life, and paid his bills as promptly as the practical banker, his father. In company, we are told, he was in fact taken for some lively financier. His mode of life in any man without his gifts — or without his famous friends — would have been commonplace.

*Pauline*, published in 1833, but far more *Paracelsus*, in 1835, won for Browning many of those friends, who, themselves admired, became admirers of his genius, or lovers of the man himself, or both. Among them were Leigh Hunt, John Stuart Mill, the "poor old lion" Landor, Thomas Carlyle, with many others. At a dinner, where not only Landor was present, but the great Wordsworth, their host, Serjeant Talfourd, proposing "The Poets of England," coupled with the toast the name of "Mr. Robert Browning, the author of *Paracelsus*." Wordsworth, leaning across the table, said — "I am proud to drink your health, Mr. Brown-



ing." And before the evening was over, the tragic actor Macready had made this youngest of the poets promise to write him a play. *Strafford*, the result of this promise, was performed at Covent Garden Theatre on May 1, 1837. Though the mismanagement of the theatre allowed it to run for only a few nights, the play was well received and, as Browning wrote afterward, was applauded by "a pitful of good-natured people."

His career as dramatist and poet was now fully begun. His published works form so long a list that we can mention only the more important. After the first three, already named, and after *Sordello*, in 1840, appeared *Pippa Passes*, in 1841; *King Victor and King Charles*, and the *Dramatic Lyrics*, in 1842; *The Return of the Druses*, and *A Blot in the 'Scutcheon*, in 1843; *Colombe's Birthday*, in 1844; *Dramatic Romances and Lyrics*, in 1845; and in 1846, *Luria* and *A Soul's Tragedy*. All these form parts I to VIII of *Bells and Pomegranates*. To them succeeded *Men and Women*, 1855; *Dramatis Personæ*, 1864; *The Ring and the Book*, 1868-69; *Balaustion's Adventure*, and *Prince Hohenstiel-Schwangau*, 1871; *Fifine at the Fair*, 1872; *Aristophanes' Apology*, and *The Inn Album*, 1875; *Pacchiarotto, and other Poems*, 1876; *The Agamemnon of Æschylus*, 1877; *Dramatic Idyls*, 1879-80; *Jocoseria*, 1883; *Ferishtah's Fancies*, 1884; and finally *Asolando*, 1889.

Throughout these long labours, Browning remained a vigorous, wholesome man, interested in many things—studying music, learning to paint pictures, making clay models and smashing them, analysing criminal cases

with all the relish of an amateur detective. Lockhart said that he liked Browning because he was not a literary man. The vanities and jealousies of little writers were not in him; he admired all kinds of good work, remained warm friends with many irritable brothers in genius. Though he had the temper of a fighting man, attacks on his own works, charges of obscurity and affectation, did not ruffle him. His attitude toward *Sordello* was characteristic. After Douglas Jerrold, recovering from serious illness, had put down the book in defeat and dismay, crying—"O God, I *am* an idiot!"—after Carlyle said that his wife had "read through *Sordello* without being able to make out whether 'Sordello' was a man, or a city, or a book,"—in short, after it had become humorous or fashionable not to understand Browning, he maintained the same manly position: "I blame nobody, least of all myself, who did my best then and since."

He had long admired the poetry of Miss Elizabeth Barrett, a high-spirited, courageous, and already famous woman who for many years had been bed-ridden. Her father, obstinately believing that she would never recover, kept her in a darkened room, to which few visitors were admitted; but through a common friend, John Kenyon, her "fairy godfather," the two poets began a correspondence which has become famous. In 1846 they met, in the sick-room. It is a long and beautiful story, how the prince broke the hedge about this Sleeping Princess, and—when her father had forbidden her to seek health in Italy—how Browning, the punc-

tilious, conventional man, braved the world's opinion to rescue her. They were married quietly in St. Mary-lebone Church, on September 12, 1846, and as quietly made their way across the continent to Italy. In all the history of marriages, perhaps none was ever happier. Mrs. Browning was soon restored to health, to sunshine, and to brilliant friends. In the spring of 1849, at Florence, their son Robert was born. And in Florence, in June, 1861, after "a great love had kept her on earth" for fifteen years, Mrs. Browning died. The rest of her husband's life is summed up in his brave sentence—"I mean to keep writing, whether I like it or not."

Browning died at Venice, on December 12, 1889. He was buried in the Poet's Corner of Westminster Abbey.

## II. POEMS

Of Robert Browning's poetry it is possible that you have read little or nothing; but it is hardly possible, in such a case, that you have not heard more than one joke, good or bad, laughable or stupid, on the subject of his obscurity. These jokes have become hackneyed, yet perhaps they still tend to make persons who have not read Browning think him hard to understand. In his longer poems he is, indeed, anything but clear. Tennyson, after reading *Sordello*, said the opening line of the poem,—

"Who will, may hear Sordello's story told,"

and the closing,—

"Who would, has heard Sordello's story told,"



were the only lines he understood, and they were both lies. You, however, will have no call to read *Sordello* or any other long, perplexing poem, — it may be for years, and it may be forever. Should you find any given page obscure, at sight, the printed lines will become clearer as you read them aloud, because Browning, when he wrote, followed the order of spoken English rather than of written English. He has, moreover, many short poems, full of great beauty and meaning, in which neither beauty nor meaning should escape you if you will remember one simple and important fact.

This fact is, that Browning wrote the greater part of his verses, whether songs or stories, in a fashion wholly different from the fashion of his companion poets. The difference you will quickly see : except in comparatively rare instances, he does not speak to you directly out of his own heart, like Wordsworth, or Byron, or Shelley, or Keats, but indirectly out of the heart and from the lips of some real or imagined character. Browning is, in other words, a dramatic poet.

This does not mean that he is both poet and dramatist, as Shakespeare was. Though many persons have admired Browning's plays, you will discover, when you come to them later, that those plays lack some quality which audiences demand in the theatre. At all events, you will agree that Browning is not first and foremost a playwright, and yet that he is supreme in one province of the playwright's art, — a province which he annexed to the kingdom of poetry. He himself called certain of his poems "Dramatic Lyrics" and "Dramatic Idyls."

These form a class of poetry so new in Browning's time, so characteristic of his genius, and so much his favourite way of writing, that we always think of them as his own undisputed invention. Some, though not all, of his pieces in this book are dramatic lyrics or episodes, and will show you, briefly yet clearly, what Browning was fondest of writing and how he set about to write.

The poems which are not of this sort will easily explain themselves. The *Cavalier Tunes* are, as you will see, rousing songs roared out lustily by "great-hearted gentlemen," who have sat down with right English appetites to a table where the pasty is good and the wine plentiful, or who have jumped up in high spirits at the call of "Boots and Saddles," to ride out for Church and King. *Home-Thoughts, from Abroad* shows not only the longing of an exile, among the gaudy melon-flowers of Italy, for the sights and sounds of April in England, but also a keen eye for the little processes of Nature which make beautiful such fields and hedges as a man might see in any week-day ramble.

In *Home-Thoughts, from the Sea*, Browning recalls with gorgeous colour and triumphant tone, the places of victory, Gibraltar, Cadiz Bay, Trafalgar, — where England has taught him the proud lesson and service of patriotism. In both of these poems, he speaks with his own voice; as also in *The Lost Leader*, where he cries out, in both sorrow and indignation, not against a single deserter from a single cause, but against all deserters from all good causes. With his own voice, too, he narrates the smiling, mortal heroism of the young soldier



whose death was but an *Incident of the French Camp*; and in more deliberate lines tells of *The Boy and the Angel*, who changed places in order to prove that God demands praise from all His creatures, and rejoices no less in a poor workman's song at his bench than in "the Pope's great way" of praise.

The remaining pieces here set before you illustrate, in various manner and degree, Browning's dramatic habit. *Hervé Riel* is, to be sure, told by the poet, not by his spokesman; it begins in a narrative vein, and ends with an epilogue or commentary; but the scene of the episode is definitely and vividly kept on the deck of Damfreville's ship, the *Formidable*, where we see the brave and ready pilot at his work, we hear him laugh, and answer boldly, and holla "Anchor!", just as we hear his dialogue with Damfreville, and the cheers that rise under the ramparts of Solidor. Neither scene nor action is anything but dramatic. The poet's order is obeyed: —

"In my verse, Hervé Riel, do thou once more  
Save the squadron, honour France, love thy wife the Belle  
Aurore!"

In *Evelyn Hope* — though the poem is meditative and, as it were, silent — the first stanza discloses the scene as if for a play: —

"Beautiful Evelyn Hope is dead!  
Sit and watch by her side an hour.  
That is her book-shelf, this her bed;  
She plucked that piece of geranium-flower,

Beginning to die, too, in the glass;  
Little has yet been changed, I think :  
The shutters are shut, no light may pass  
Save two long rays thro' the hinge's chink."

And though the following stanzas contain no action, they unfold the soliloquy of the principal actor who sits watching, and bends at last to shut the geranium leaf inside the dead girl's hand.

*How They brought the Good News* is confined, of course, to no single scene, but moves with fiery swiftness through league after league. It has been called a ballad of brave horses. Yet even here, as we gallop with Dirck and Joris through the night, the sunrise, and the glaring day, we have taken the place of the third, nameless hero, swung into his saddle, and galloped onward in all his exhilaration and impatience. We ourselves shove the hero aside—as Stevenson has finely said—to bathe in fresh experience. We see how—

"At Aershot, up leaped of a sudden the sun,  
And against him the cattle stood black every one,  
To stare through the mist at us galloping past."

The stirring ride is, after all, a narrative, but it starts with a rush that leaves us no time to question or to catch breath; we spring to the stirrup in the first line, and gallop till Roland halts in Aix.

*Pheidippides*, with an opening not so abrupt, is the one poem which may leave you puzzled until the action has begun, and perhaps after. Here, more than in any of the foregoing pieces, you must remember the one simple, important fact of which we spoke,—that

Browning is a lyrical dramatist. Here, more than ever, you must ask yourselves who it is that speaks. In his opening lines Browning is like an actor who appears in many disguises. This story of the glorious race from Athens to Sparta, from Marathon to the Acropolis, is told (at the outset, and nearly to the end) by the runner himself,—the exultant young Pheidippides, returning to hail the land which he saved by his speed. The beauties of the poem you are in no danger of overlooking. Of heroic temper, it runs and races as though with the feathered ankles of Mercury. It is “a field which the fire runs through.”

*One Word More*, the beautiful lines in which Browning devotes himself and his whole achievement to his wife, will show you better than any words of prose in what mode he loved to practise his art. In the fifteenth stanza he says:—

“Love, you saw me gather men and women,  
Live or dead or fashioned by my fancy,  
Enter each and all, and use their service,  
Speak from every mouth,—the speech, a poem.  
Hardly shall I tell my joys and sorrows,  
Hopes and fears, belief and disbelieving:  
I am mine and yours — the rest be all men’s,  
Karshish, Cleon, Norbert, and the fifty.”

The moral, the doctrine of brave glad optimism which Browning everywhere enforces, you will in later reading piece together from many poems, and find yourselves the better for. A highly complex poet, Browning held a simple creed. In *Hervé Riel* and in a

score of other pieces, he chose for his heroes no great shining figures, splendidly rewarded. The pilot, an obscure, plain man, gained only the cheers aboard ship and a day ashore to see his wife. His feat was not set off to the world or trumpeted abroad. Success, to Browning, never means riches, or fame, or even the fulfilment of a man's or a woman's purpose in life. Defeat, to him, was not by any means failure. The human spirit, he tells us again and again, may still be unconquerable even in disaster, when all the odds of life and fate are dead against us, as were those grim watchers on the hills who mocked Childe Roland at the Dark Tower. The success, the reward in such a desperate pass, is the knowledge that we can do our best proudly, as Childe Roland blew the last challenge on his slug-horn. The wisdom of Browning is not the wisdom of this world. Like Ecclesiastes, he might say:—

“This wisdom have I seen under the sun, and it seemed great unto me:

“There was a little city, and few men within it; and there came a great king against it, and built great bulwarks against it.

“Now there was found in it a poor wise man, and he by his wisdom delivered the city; yet no man remembered that same poor man.

“Then said I, Wisdom is better than strength, nevertheless the poor man's wisdom is despised and his words are not heard.

“The words of wise men are heard in quiet more than the cry of him that ruleth among fools.”

The moral and the motive of this Biblical story might be those of almost any dramatic episode in



Browning. To him, glory and honour lie with the man who has done good work, and with that man only. The world may be full of errors and defeats and misjudgments. But Browning, nobly audacious, declares that "God's in his Heaven, All's right with the world!" Old age, the great probability of failure, death at last, wait for us in that world; but meanwhile this courageous poet would have us —

"Strive, and hold cheap the strain,  
Learn, nor account the pang,  
Dare, never grudge the throe."

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## SELECTIONS FROM BROWNING

	PAGE
CAVALIER TUNES . . . . .	261
INCIDENT OF THE FRENCH CAMP . . . . .	264
THE LOST LEADER . . . . .	266
“HOW THEY BROUGHT THE GOOD NEWS FROM GHENT TO AIX” . . . . .	267
EVELYN HOPE . . . . .	271
HOME-THOUGHTS, FROM ABROAD . . . . .	273
HOME-THOUGHTS, FROM THE SEA . . . . .	274
THE BOY AND THE ANGEL . . . . .	275
ONE WORD MORE . . . . .	278
HERVÉ RIEL . . . . .	287
PHEIDIPPIDES . . . . .	294
MY LAST DUCHESS . . . . .	302
UP AT A VILLA — DOWN IN THE CITY . . . . .	304



# SELECTIONS FROM BROWNING

## I

### CAVALIER TUNES

#### I

#### MARCHING ALONG

##### I

KENTISH Sir Byng stood for his King,  
Bidding the crop-headed Parliament swing :  
And, pressing a troop unable to stoop  
And see the rogues flourish and honest folk droop,  
Marched them along, fifty-score strong, 5  
Great-hearted gentlemen, singing this song.

##### II

God for King Charles ! Pym and such carles  
To the Devil that prompts 'em their treasonous parles  
Cavaliers, up ! Lips from the cup,  
Hands from the pasty, nor bite take nor sup 10  
Till you're —

*(Chorus) Marching along, fifty-score strong,  
Great-hearted gentlemen, singing this song.*

## III

Hampden to hell, and his obsequies' knell  
 Serve Hazelrig, Fiennes, and young Harry as well ! 15  
 England, good cheer ! Rupert is near !  
 Kentish and loyalists, keep we not here,

*(Chorus) Marching along, fifty-score strong,  
 Great-hearted gentlemen, singing this song ?*

## IV

Then, God for King Charles ! Pym and his snarls 20  
 To the Devil that pricks on such pestilent carles !  
 Hold by the right, you double your might ;  
 So, onward to Nottingham, fresh for the fight,

*(Chorus) March we along, fifty-score strong, 24  
 Great-hearted gentlemen, singing this song !*

## 2

## GIVE A ROUSE

## I

King Charles, and who'll do him right now ?  
 King Charles, and who's ripe for fight now ?  
 Give a rouse : here's, in hell's despite now,  
 King Charles !

## II

Who gave me the goods that went since ?  
 Who raised me the house that sank once ?

Who helped me to gold I spent since ?  
 Who found me in wine you drank once ?

*(Chorus) King Charles, and who'll do him right now ?  
 King Charles, and who's ripe for fight now ? 35  
 Give a rouse : here's, in hell's despite now,  
 King Charles !*

## III

To whom used my boy George quaff else,  
 By the old fool's side that begot him ?  
 For whom did he cheer and laugh else, 40  
 While Noll's damned troopers shot him ?

*(Chorus) King Charles, and who'll do him right now ?  
 King Charles, and who's ripe for fight now ?  
 Give a rouse : here's, in hell's despite now,  
 King Charles ! 45*

## 3

## BOOT AND SADDLE

## I

Boot, saddle, to horse, and away !  
 Rescue my castle before the hot day  
 Brightens to blue from its silvery gray,

*(Chorus) Boot, saddle, to horse and away !*

## II

Ride past the suburbs, asleep as you'd say ; 50  
 Many's the friend there, will listen and pray  
 "God's luck to gallants that strike up the lay —

*(Chorus) " Boot, saddle, to horse, and away ! "*



## III

Forty miles off, like a roebuck at bay,  
 Flouts Castle Brancepeth the Roundheads' array: 55  
 Who laughs, "Good fellows ere this, by my fay,"<sup>1</sup>  
     *(Chorus) "Boot, saddle, to horse, and away!"*

## IV

Who? My wife Gertrude; that, honest and gay,  
 Laughs when you talk of surrendering, "Nay!  
 I've better counsellors; what counsel they? 60  
     *(Chorus) "Boot, saddle, to horse, and away!"*

## II

## INCIDENT OF THE FRENCH CAMP

## I

You know, we French stormed Ratisbon:  
     A mile or so away,  
 On a little mound, Napoleon  
     Stood on our storming-day; 65  
 With neck out-thrust, you fancy how,  
     Legs wide, arms locked behind,  
 As if to balance the prone brow  
     Oppressive with its mind.

## II

Just as perhaps he mused "My plans 70  
     That soar, to earth may fall,

<sup>1</sup> Faith.

Let once my army-leader Lannes  
    Waver at yonder wall," —  
Out 'twixt the battery-smokes there flew  
    A rider, bound on bound 75  
Full-galloping ; nor bridle drew  
    Until he reached the mound.

## III

Then off there flung in smiling joy,  
    And held himself erect  
By just his horse's mane, a boy: 80  
    You hardly could suspect —  
(So tight he kept his lips compressed,  
    Scarce any blood came through)  
You looked twice ere you saw his breast  
    Was all but shot in two. 85

## IV

" Well," cried he, " Emperor, by God's grace  
    We've got you Ratisbon !  
The Marshal's in the market-place,  
    And you'll be there anon  
To see your flag-bird flap his vans 90  
    Where I, to heart's desire,  
Perched him ! " The chief's eye flashed ; his plans  
    Soared up again like fire.

## V

The chief's eye flashed ; but presently  
    Softened itself, as sheathes 95

A film the mother-eagle's eye  
 When her bruised eaglet breathes ;  
 " You're wounded ! " " Nay," the soldier's pride  
 Touched to the quick, he said :  
 " I'm killed, Sire ! " And his chief beside, 100  
 Smiling the boy fell dead.

## III

## THE LOST LEADER

## I

Just for a handful of silver he left us,  
 Just for a riband to stick in his coat —  
 Found the one gift of which fortune bereft us,  
 Lost all the others she lets us devote ; 105  
 They, with the gold to give, doled him out silver,  
 So much was theirs who so little allowed :  
 How all our copper had gone for his service !  
 Rags — were they purple, his heart had been proud !  
 We that had loved him so, followed him, honoured him,  
 Lived in his mild and magnificent eye, 111  
 Learned his great language, caught his clear accents,  
 Made him our pattern to live and to die !  
 Shakespeare was of us, Milton was for us,  
 Burns, Shelley, were with us, — they watch from their  
 graves ! 115  
 He alone breaks from the van and the freemen,  
 — He alone sinks to the rear and the slaves !

## II

We shall march prospering, — not through his presence ;  
Songs may inspirit us, — not from his lyre ;  
Deeds will be done, — while he boasts his quiescence,  
Still bidding crouch whom the rest bade aspire : 121  
Blot out his name, then, record one lost soul more,  
One task more declined, one more footpath untrod,  
One more devils'-triumph and sorrow for angels,  
One wrong more to man, one more insult to God ! 125  
Life's night begins : let him never come back to us !  
There would be doubt, hesitation and pain,  
Forced praise on our part — the glimmer of twilight,  
Never glad confident morning again !  
Best fight on well, for we taught him — strike gallantly,  
Menace our heart ere we master his own ; 131  
Then let him receive the new knowledge and wait us,  
Pardoned in heaven, the first by the throne !

## IV

“HOW THEY BROUGHT THE GOOD NEWS FROM  
GHENT TO AIX ”

## I

I sprang to the stirrup, and Joris, and he ;  
I galloped, Dirck galloped, we galloped all three ; 135  
“Good speed ! ” cried the watch, as the gate-bolts undrew ;  
“Speed ! ” echoed the wall to us galloping through ;

Behind shut the postern, the lights sank to rest,  
And into the midnight we galloped abreast.

## II

Not a word to each other ; we kept the great pace 140  
Neck by neck, stride by stride, never changing our place ;  
I turned in my saddle and made its girths tight,  
Then shortened each stirrup, and set the pique<sup>1</sup> right,  
Rebuckled the cheek-strap, chained slacker the bit,  
Nor galloped less steadily Roland a whit. 145

## III

'Twas moonset at starting ; but while we drew near  
Lokeren, the cocks crew and twilight dawned clear ;  
At Boom, a great yellow star came out to see ;  
At Düffeld, 'twas morning as plain as could be ;  
And from Mecheln church-steeple we heard the half-  
chime, 150  
So Joris broke silence with, " Yet there is time ! "

## IV

At Aershot, up leaped of a sudden the sun,  
And against him the cattle stood black every one,  
To stare thro' the mist at us galloping past,  
And I saw my stout galloper Roland at last, 155  
With resolute shoulders, each butting away  
The haze, as some bluff river headland its spray :

<sup>1</sup> The pommel of the saddle.



## V

And his low head and crest, just one sharp ear bent  
back

For my voice, and the other pricked out on his track ;  
And one eye's black intelligence, — ever that glance 160  
O'er its white edge at me, his own master, askance!  
And the thick heavy spume-flakes which aye and anon  
His fierce lips shook upwards in galloping on.

## VI

By Hasselt, Dirck groaned; and cried Joris, " Stay spur !  
Your Roos galloped bravely, the fault's not in her, 165  
We'll remember at Aix " — for one heard the quick  
wheeze

Of her chest, saw the stretched neck and staggering  
knees,  
And sunk tail, and horrible heave of the flank,  
As down on her haunches she shuddered and sank.

## VII

So, we were left galloping, Joris and I, 170  
Past Looz and past Tongres, no cloud in the sky ;  
The broad sun above laughed a pitiless laugh,  
'Neath our feet broke the brittle bright stubble like  
chaff ;

Till over by Dalhem a dome-spire sprang white,  
And " Gallop," gasped Joris, " for Aix is in sight ! " 175

## VIII

“ How they'll greet us ! ” — and all in a moment his  
roan

Rolled neck and croup over, lay dead as a stone ;  
And there was my Roland to bear the whole weight  
Of the news which alone could save Aix from her fate,  
With his nostrils like pits full of blood to the brim, 180  
And with circles of red for his eye-sockets' rim.

## IX

Then I cast loose my buffcoat, each holster let fall,  
Shook off both my jack-boots, let go belt and all,  
Stood up in the stirrup, leaned, patted his ear,  
Called my Roland his pet-name, my horse without peer ;  
Clapped my hands, laughed and sang, any noise, bad or  
good, 186  
Till at length into Aix Roland galloped and stood.

## X

And all I remember is, — friends flocking round  
As I sat with his head 'twixt my knees on the ground ;  
And no voice but was praising this Roland of mine, 190  
As I poured down his throat our last measure of wine,  
Which (the burgesses voted by common consent)  
Was no more than his due who brought good news from  
Ghent.

## V

## EVELYN HOPE

## I

Beautiful Evelyn Hope is dead !

Sit and watch by her side an hour. 195

That is her book-shelf, this her bed ;

She plucked that piece of geranium-flower,  
Beginning to die, too, in the glass ;

Little has yet been changed, I think :

The shutters are shut, no light may pass 200

Save two long rays thro' the hinge's chink.

## II

Sixteen years old when she died !

Perhaps she had scarcely heard my name :

It was not her time to love ; beside,

Her life had many a hope and aim, 205

Duties enough and little cares,

And now was quiet, now astir,

Till God's hand beckoned unawares, —

And the sweet white brow is all of her.

## III

Is it too late then, Evelyn Hope? 210

What, your soul was pure and true,

The good stars met in your horoscope,

Made you of spirit, fire and dew —

And, just because I was thrice as old  
And our paths in the world diverged so wide, 215  
Each was naught to each, must I be told?  
We were fellow mortals, naught beside?

## IV

No, indeed! for God above  
Is great to grant, as mighty to make,  
And creates the love to reward the love: 220  
I claim you still, for my own love's sake!  
Delayed it may be for more lives yet,  
Through worlds I shall traverse, not a few:  
Much is to learn, much to forget  
Ere the time be come for taking you. 225

## V

But the time will come, at last it will,  
When, Evelyn Hope, what meant (I shall say)  
In the lower earth, in the years long still,  
That body and soul so pure and gay?  
Why your hair was amber, I shall divine, 230  
And your mouth of your own geranium's red —  
And what you would do with me, in fine,  
In the new life come in the old one's stead.

## VI

I have lived (I shall say) so much since then,  
Given up myself so many times, 235  
Gained me the gains of various men,  
Ransacked the ages, spoiled the climes;

Yet one thing, one, in my soul's full scope,  
Either I missed or itself missed me :  
And I want and find you, Evelyn Hope ! 240  
What is the issue ? let us see !

## VII

I loved you, Evelyn, all the while !  
My heart seemed full as it could hold ;  
There was place and to spare for the frank young  
smile,  
And the red young mouth, and the hair's young  
gold. 245  
So, hush, — I will give you this leaf to keep :  
See, I shut it inside the sweet cold hand !  
There, that is our secret : go to sleep !  
You will wake, and remember, and understand.

## VI

## HOME-THOUGHTS, FROM ABROAD

Oh, to be in England now that April's there, 250  
And whoever wakes in England sees, some morning,  
unaware,  
That the lowest boughs and the brushwood sheaf  
Round the elm tree bole<sup>1</sup> are in tiny leaf,  
While the chaffinch sings on the orchard bough  
In England — now ! 255

<sup>1</sup> Trunk.



And after April, when May follows  
 And the whitethroat builds, and all the swallows !  
 Hark, where my blossomed pear tree in the hedge  
 Leans to the field and scatters on the clover 259  
 Blossoms and dewdrops — at the bent spray's edge —  
 That's the wise thrush : he sings each song twice over  
 Lest you should think he never could recapture  
 The first fine careless rapture !  
 And, though the fields look rough with hoary dew,  
 All will be gay when noontide wakes anew 261  
 The buttercups, the little children's dower  
 — Far brighter than this gaudy melon-flower !

## VII

## HOME-THOUGHTS, FROM THE SEA

Nobly, nobly Cape Saint Vincent to the Northwest diec  
 away ;  
 Sunset ran, one glorious blood-red, reeking into Cadiz  
 Bay ;  
 Bluish 'mid the burning water, full in face Trafalgar  
 lay ; 270  
 In the dimmest Northeast distance dawned Gibraltar  
 grand and gray ;  
 " Here and here did England help me : how can I help  
 England ? " — say,  
 Whoso turns as I, this evening, turn to God to praise  
 and pray,  
 While Jove's planet rises yonder, silent over Africa.

VIII

THE BOY AND THE ANGEL

Morning, evening, noon and night  
 " Praise God ! " sang Theocrite. 275

Then to his poor trade he turned,  
 Whereby the daily meal was earned.

Hard he laboured, long and well ;  
 O'er his work the boy's curls fell. 280

But ever, at each period,  
 He stopped and sang, " Praise God ! "

Then back again his curls he threw,  
 And cheerful turned to work anew.

Said Blaise, the listening monk, " Well done ; 285  
 I doubt not thou art heard, my son :

" As well as if thy voice to-day  
 Were praising God, the Pope's great way.

" This Easter Day, the Pope at Rome  
 Praises God from Peter's dome." 290

Said Theocrite, " Would God that I  
 Might praise Him, that great way, and die ! "

Night passed, day shone,  
 And Theocrite was gone.

With God a day endures alway, 295  
A thousand years are but a day.

God said in heaven, "Nor day nor night  
Now brings the voice of my delight."

Then Gabriel, like a rainbow's birth,  
Spread his wings and sank to earth ; 300

Entered, in flesh, the empty cell,  
Lived there, and played the craftsman well ;

And morning, evening, noon and night,  
Praised God in place of Theocrite.

And from a boy, to youth he grew : 305  
The man put off the stripling's hue :

The man matured and fell away  
Into the season of decay :

And ever o'er the trade he bent,  
And ever lived on earth content. 310

(He did God's will ; to him, all one  
If on the earth or in the sun.)

God said, "A praise is in mine ear ;  
There is no doubt in it, no fear :

"So sing old worlds, and so 315  
New worlds that from my footstool go.

“Clearer loves sound other ways :  
I miss my little human praise.”

Then forth sprang Gabriel’s wings, off fell  
The flesh disguise, remained the cell. 320

’Twas Easter Day : he flew to Rome,  
And paused above Saint Peter’s dome.

In the tiring-room close by  
The great outer gallery,

With his holy vestments dight,<sup>1</sup> 325  
Stood the new Pope, Theocrite :

And all his past career  
Came back upon him clear,

Since when, a boy, he plied his trade,  
Till on his life the sickness weighed ; 330

And in his cell, when death drew near,  
An angel in a dream brought cheer :

And rising from the sickness drear,  
He grew a priest, and now stood here.

To the East with praise he turned, 335  
And on his sight the angel burned.

“I bore thee from thy craftsman’s cell,  
And set thee here ; I did not well.

<sup>1</sup> Clothed.

“ Vainly I left my angel-sphere,  
Vain was thy dream of many a year. 340

“ Thy voice’s praise seemed weak ; it dropped —  
Creation’s chorus stopped !

“ Go back and praise again  
The early way, while I remain.

“ With that weak voice of our disdain, 345  
Take up creation’s pausing strain.

Back to the cell and poor employ :  
Resume the craftsman and the boy !”

Theocrite grew old at home ;  
A new Pope dwelt in Peter’s dome. 350

One vanished as the other died :  
They sought God side by side.

## IX

### ONE WORD MORE

#### I

There they are, my fifty men and women  
Naming me the fifty poems finished !  
Take them, Love, the book and me together : 355  
Where the heart lies, let the brain lie also.



## II

Rafael made a century<sup>1</sup> of sonnets,  
Made and wrote them in a certain volume  
Dinted with the silver-pointed pencil  
Else he only used to draw Madonnas : 360  
These, the world might view — but one, the volume.  
Who that one, you ask ? Your heart instructs you.  
Did she live and love it all her lifetime ?  
Did she drop, his lady of the sonnets,  
Die, and let it drop beside her pillow 365  
Where it lay in place of Rafael's glory,  
Rafael's cheek so duteous and so loving —  
Cheek, the world was wont to hail a painter's,  
Rafael's cheek, her love had turned a poet's ?

## III

You and I would rather read that volume, 370  
(Taken to his beating bosom by it)  
Lean and list the bosom-beats of Rafael,  
Would we not ? than wonder at Madonnas —  
Her, San Sisto names, and Her, Foligno,  
Her, that visits Florence in a vision, 375  
Her, that's left with lilies in the Louvre —  
Seen by us and all the world in circle.

## IV

You and I will never read that volume.  
Guido Reni, like his own eye's apple

<sup>1</sup> Hundred.

Guarded long the treasure-book and loved it. 380  
 Guido Reni dying, all Bologna  
 Cried, and the world cried too, "Ours, the treasure!"  
 Suddenly, as rare things will, it vanished.

## v

Dante once prepared to paint an angel:  
 Whom to please? You whisper "Beatrice." 385  
 While he mused and traced it and retraced it,  
 (Peradventure with a pen corroded  
 Still by drops of that hot ink he dipped for,  
 When, his left-hand i' the hair o' the wicked,  
 Back he held the brow and pricked its stigma, 390  
 Bit into the live man's flesh for parchment,  
 Loosed him, laughed to see the writing rankle,  
 Let the wretch go festering through Florence) —  
 Dante, who loved well because he hated,  
 Hated wickedness that hinders loving, 395  
 Dante standing, studying his angel, —  
 In there broke the folk of his Inferno.  
 Says he — "Certain people of importance"  
 (Such he gave his daily dreadful line to)  
 "Entered and would seize, forsooth, the poet." 400  
 Says the poet — "Then I stopped my painting."

## vi

You and I would rather see that angel,  
 Painted by the tenderness of Dante,  
 Would we not? — than read a fresh Inferno.

## VII

You and I will never see that picture. 405  
While he mused on love and Beatrice,  
While he softened o'er his outlined angel,  
In they broke, those "people of importance :"  
We and Bice<sup>1</sup> bear the loss for ever.

## VIII

What of Rafael's sonnets, Dante's picture? 410  
This : no artist lives and loves, that longs not  
Once, and only once, and for one only,  
(Ah, the prize !) to find his love a language  
Fit and fair and simple and sufficient —  
Using nature that's an art to others, 415  
Not, this one time, art that's turned his nature.  
Ay, of all the artists living, loving,  
None but would forego his proper dowry, —  
Does he paint? he fain would write a poem, —  
Does he write? he fain would paint a picture, 420  
Put to proof art alien to the artist's,  
Once, and only once, and for one only,  
So to be the man and leave the artist,  
Gain the man's joy, miss the artist's sorrow.

## IX

Wherefore? Heaven's gift takes earth's abatement ! 425  
He who smites the rock and spreads the water,

<sup>1</sup> Beatrice.

Bidding drink and live a crowd beneath him,  
 Even he, the minute makes immortal,  
 Proves, perchance, but mortal in the minute,  
 Desecrates, belike, the deed in doing. 430  
 While he smites, how can he but remember,  
 So he smote before, in such a peril,  
 When they stood and mocked — “ Shall smiting help  
 us? ”

When they drank and sneered — “ A stroke is easy ! ”  
 When they wiped their mouths and went their journey,  
 Throwing him for thanks — “ But drought was pleas-  
 ant.” 436

Thus old memories mar the actual triumph ;  
 Thus the doing savours of disrelish ;  
 Thus achievement lacks a gracious somewhat ;  
 O'er-importuned brows becloud the mandate, 440  
 Carelessness or consciousness, the gesture.  
 For he bears an ancient wrong about him,  
 Sees and knows again those phalanxed faces,  
 Hears, yet one time more, the 'customed prelude —  
 “ How shouldst thou, of all men, smite, and save us ? ”  
 Guesses what is like to prove the sequel — 446  
 “ Egypt's flesh-pots — nay, the drought was better.”

## X

Oh, the crowd must have emphatic warrant !  
 Theirs, the Sinai-forehead's cloven brilliance,  
 Right-arm's rod-sweep, tongue's imperial fiat. 450  
 Never dares the man put off the prophet.

## XI

Did he love one face from out the thousands,  
(Were she Jethro's daughter, white and wifely,  
Were she but the Æthiopian bondslave,)  
He would envy yon dumb patient camel, 455  
Keeping a reserve of scanty water  
Meant to save his own life in the desert;  
Ready in the desert to deliver  
(Kneeling down to let his breast be opened)  
Hoard and life together for his mistress. 460

## XII

I shall never, in the years remaining,  
Paint you pictures, no, nor carve you statues,  
Make you music that should all-express me;  
So it seems: I stand on my attainment.  
This of verse alone, one life allows me; 465  
Verse and nothing else have I to give you.  
Other heights in other lives, God willing:  
All the gifts from all the heights, your own, Love!

## XIII

Yet a semblance of resource avails us —  
Shade so finely touched, love's sense must seize it. 470  
Take these lines, look lovingly and nearly,  
Lines I write the first time and the last time.  
He who works in fresco, steals a hair-brush,  
Curbs the liberal hand, subservient proudly,



Cramps his spirit, crowds its all in little, 475  
 Makes a strange art of an art familiar,  
 Fills his lady's missal-marge<sup>1</sup> with flowerets.  
 He who blows through bronze, may breathe through  
     silver,  
 Fitly serenade a slumbrous princess.  
 He who writes, may write for once as I do. 480

## XIV

Love, you saw me gather men and women,  
 Live or dead or fashioned by my fancy,  
 Enter each and all, and use their service,  
 Speak from every mouth, — the speech, a poem.  
 Hardly shall I tell my joys and sorrows, 485  
 Hopes and fears, belief and disbelieving :  
 I am mine and yours — the rest be all men's,  
 Karshish, Cleon, Norbert, and the fifty.  
 Let me speak this once in my true person,  
 Not as Lippo, Roland, or Andrea, 490  
 Though the fruit of speech be just this sentence :  
 Pray you, look on these my men and women,  
 Take and keep my fifty poems finished ;  
 Where my heart lies, let my brain lie also !  
 Poor the speech ; be how I speak, for all things. 495

## XV

Not but that you know me ! Lo, the moon's self !  
 Here in London, yonder late in Florence,

<sup>1</sup> Margin of a prayer-book.

Still we find her face, the thrice-transfigured.  
Curving on a sky imbrued with colour,  
Drifted over Fiesole by twilight, 500  
Came she, our new crescent of a hair's-breadth.  
Full she flared it, lamping Samminiato,  
Rounder 'twixt the cypresses and rounder,  
Perfect till the nightingales applauded.  
Now, a piece of her old self, impoverished, 505  
Hard to greet, she traverses the house-roofs,  
Hurries with unhandsome thrift of silver,  
Goes dispiritedly, glad to finish.

## XVI

What, there's nothing in the moon noteworthy?  
Nay: for if that moon could love a mortal, 510  
Use, to charm him (so to fit a fancy),  
All her magic ('tis the old sweet mythos),  
She would turn a new side to her mortal,  
Side unseen of herdsman, huntsman, steersman —  
Blank to Zoroaster on his terrace, 515  
Blind to Galileo on his turret,  
Dumb to Homer, dumb to Keats — him, even!  
Think, the wonder of the moonstruck mortal —  
When she turns round, comes again in heaven,  
Opens out anew for worse or better! 520  
Proves she like some portent of an iceberg  
Swimming full upon the ship it founders,  
Hungry with huge teeth of splintered crystals?  
Proves she as the paved work of a sapphire

Seen by Moses when he climbed the mountain? 525  
 Moses, Aaron, Nadab and Abihu  
 Climbed and saw the very God, the Highest,  
 Stand upon the paved work of a sapphire.  
 Like the bodied heaven in his clearness  
 Shone the stone, the sapphire of that paved work, 530  
 When they ate and drank and saw God also !

## XVII

What were seen ? None knows, none ever shall know.  
 Only this is sure — the sight were other,  
 Not the moon's same side, born late in Florence,  
 Dying now impoverished here in London. 535  
 God be thanked, the meanest of his creatures  
 Boasts two soul-sides, one to face the world with,  
 One to show a woman when he loves her !

## XVIII

This I say of me, but think of you, Love !  
 This to you — yourself my moon of poets ! 540  
 Ah, but that's the world's side — there's the wonder,  
 Thus they see you, praise you, think they know you !  
 There, in turn I stand with them and praise you —  
 Out of my own self, I dare to phrase it.  
 But the best is when I glide from out them, 545  
 Cross a step or two of dubious twilight,  
 Come out on the other side, the novel  
 Silent silver lights and darks undreamed of,  
 Where I hush and bless myself with silence.

## XIX

Oh, their Rafael of the dear Madonnas, 550  
Oh, their Dante of the dread Inferno,  
Wrote one song — and in my brain I sing it,  
Drew one angel — borne, see, on my bosom !

## X .

## HERVÉ RIEL

## I

On the sea and at the Hogue, sixteen hundred ninety-  
two,  
Did the English fight the French — woe to France !  
And, the thirty-first of May, helter-skelter through the  
blue, 556  
Like a crowd of frightened porpoises a shoal of sharks  
pursue,  
Came crowding ship on ship to St. Malo on the  
Rance,  
With the English fleet in view.

## II

'Twas the squadron that escaped, with the victor in  
full chase ; 560  
First and foremost of the drove, in his great ship,  
Damfreville ;  
Close on him fled, great and small,  
Twenty-two good ships in all ;  
And they signalled to the place  
“ Help the winners of a race ! 565

Get us guidance, give us harbour, take us quick —  
 or, quicker still,  
 Here's the English can and will ! ”

## III

Then the pilots of the place put out brisk and leapt on  
 board ;

“ Why, what hope or chance have ships like these to  
 pass ? ” laughed they :

“ Rocks to starboard, rocks to port, all the passage  
 scarred and scored, 570  
 Shall the ‘ *Formidable* ’ here with her twelve and eighty  
 guns

Think to make the river-mouth by the single narrow  
 way,

Trust to enter where ’tis ticklish for a craft of twenty  
 tons,

And with flow at full beside ?

Now ’tis slackest ebb of tide. 575

Reach the mooring ? Rather say,  
 While rock stands or water runs,  
 Not a ship will leave the bay ! ”

## IV

Then was called a council straight.

Brief and bitter the debate : 580

“ Here’s the English at our heels ; would you have  
 them take in tow

All that’s left us of the fleet, linked together stern and  
 bow,



For a prize to Plymouth Sound?  
 Better run the ships aground ! ”  
 (Ended Damfreville his speech). 585  
 “ Not a minute more to wait !  
 Let the Captains all and each  
 Shove ashore, then blow up, burn the vessels on the  
 beach !  
 France must undergo her fate.

v

“ Give the word ! ” But no such word 590  
 Was ever spoke or heard ;  
 For up stood, for out stepped, for in struck amid all  
 these  
 — A Captain ? A Lieutenant ? A Mate — first, sec-  
 ond, third ?  
 No such man of mark, and meet  
 With his betters to compete ! 595  
 But a simple Breton sailor pressed by Tourville for  
 the fleet,  
 A poor coasting-pilot he, Hervé Riel the Croisickese.

vi

And, “ What mockery or malice have we here ? ” cries  
 Hervé Riel :  
 “ Are you mad, you Malouins ? Are you cowards,  
 fools, or rogues ?  
 Talk to me of rocks and shoals, me who took the  
 soundings, tell 600

On my fingers every bank, every shallow, every swell  
 'Twixt the offing here and Grève where the river  
 disembogues? <sup>1</sup>

Are you bought by English gold? Is it love the lying's  
 for?

Morn and eve, night and day,  
 Have I piloted your bay, 605  
 Entered free and anchored fast at the foot of Solidor.

Burn the fleet and ruin France? That were worse  
 than fifty Hagues!

Sirs, they know I speak the truth! Sirs, believe  
 me there's a way!

Only let me lead the line,  
 Have the biggest ship to steer, 610

Get this '*Formidable*' clear,  
 Make the others follow mine,  
 And I lead them, most and least, by a passage I know  
 well,

Right to Solidor past Grève,  
 And there lay them safe and sound; 615

And if one ship misbehave,  
 — Keel so much as grate the ground,

Why, I've nothing but my life, — here's my head!"  
 cries Hervé Riel.

## VII

Not a minute more to wait.

"Steer us in, then, small and great!

620

<sup>1</sup> Pours out at the mouth.

Take the helm, lead the line, save the squadron!"  
cried its chief.

Captains, give the sailor place!

He is Admiral, in brief.

Still the north-wind, by God's grace!

See the noble fellow's face 625

As the big ship, with a bound,

Clears the entry like a hound,

Keeps the passage as its inch of way were the wide  
sea's profound!

See, safe through shoal and rock,

How they follow in a flock, 630

Not a ship that misbehaves, not a keel that grates the  
ground,

Not a spar that comes to grief!

The peril, see, is past,

All are harboured to the last,

And just as Hervé Riel hollas "Anchor!" — sure as  
fate 635

Up the English come — too late!

#### VIII

So, the storm subsides to calm:

They see the green trees wave

On the heights o'erlooking Grève.

Hearts that bled are stanch'd with balm. 640

"Just our rapture to enhance,

Let the English rake the bay,

Gnash their teeth and glare askance

As they cannonade away!

'Neath rampired<sup>1</sup> Solidor pleasant riding on the  
Rance!" 645

How hope succeeds despair on each Captain's counte-  
nance!

Out burst all with one accord,

"This is Paradise for Hell!

Let France, let France's King

Thank the man that did the thing!" 650

What a shout, and all one word,

"Hervé Riel!"

As he stepped in front once more,

Not a symptom of surprise

In the frank blue Breton eyes, 655

Just the same man as before.

## IX

Then said Damfreville, "My friend,

I must speak out at the end,

Though I find the speaking hard.

Praise is deeper than the lips: 660

You have saved the King his ships,

You must name your own reward.

'Faith, our sun was near eclipse!

Demand whate'er you will,

France remains your debtor still. 665

<sup>1</sup> Ramparted.

Ask to heart's content and have! or my name's not  
Damfreville."

## X

Then a beam of fun outbroke  
On the bearded mouth that spoke,  
As the honest heart laughed through  
Those frank eyes of Breton blue : 670  
" Since I needs must say my say,  
Since on board the duty's done,  
And from Malo Roads to Croisic Point, what is it  
but a run ? —  
Since 'tis ask and have, I may —  
Since the others go ashore — 675  
Come! A good whole holiday!  
Leave to go and see my wife, whom I call the Belle  
Aurore !"  
That he asked and that he got, — nothing more.

## XI

Name and deed alike are lost :  
Not a pillar nor a post 680  
In his Croisic keeps alive the feat as it befell ;  
Not a head in white and black  
On a single fishing-smack,  
In memory of the man but for whom had gone to  
wrack  
All that France saved from the fight whence England  
bore the bell. 685



Go to Paris : rank on rank

Search the heroes flung pell-mell  
On the Louvre, face and flank !

You shall look long enough ere you come to Hervé  
Riel.

So, for better and for worse, 690  
Hervé Riel, accept my verse !  
In my verse, Hervé Riel, do thou once more  
Save the squadron, honour France, love thy wife the  
Belle Aurore !

## XI

### PHEIDIPPIDES

*Χαίρετε, νικῶμεν.*

First I salute this soil of the blessed, river and rock !  
Gods of my birthplace, dæmons <sup>1</sup> and heroes, honour  
to all ! 695

Then I name thee, claim thee for our patron, co-equal  
in praise .

— Ay, with Zeus the Defender, with Her of the ægis  
and spear !

Also, ye of the bow and the buskin, praised be your  
peer,

Now, henceforth and forever, — O latest to whom I  
upraise

Hand and heart and voice ! For Athens, leave pas-  
ture and flock ! 700

Present to help, potent to save, Pan — patron I call !

<sup>1</sup> Lesser divinities; guardian spirits.

Archons of Athens, topped by the tettix, see, I return !  
See, 'tis myself here standing alive, no spectre that  
speaks !

Crowned with the myrtle, did you command me,  
Athens and you,

“ Run, Pheidippides, run and race, reach Sparta for aid !  
Persia has come, we are here, where is She ? ” Your  
command I obeyed, 706

Ran and raced : like stubble, some field which a fire  
runs through,

Was the space between city and city : two days, two  
nights did I burn

Over the hills, under the dales, down pits and up peaks.

Into their midst I broke : breath served but for “ Persia  
has come ! ” 710

Persia bids Athens proffer slaves'-tribute, water and  
earth ;

Razed to the ground is Eretria — but Athens, shall  
Athens sink,

Drop into dust and die — the flower of Hellas utterly  
die,

Die, with the wide world spitting at Sparta, the stupid,  
the stander-by ?

Answer me quick, what help, what hand do you stretch  
o'er destruction's brink ? 715

How, — when ? No care for my limbs ! — there's light-  
ning in all and some —

Fresh and fit your message to bear, once lips give it  
birth ! ”

O my Athens — Sparta love thee? Did Sparta respond?  
 Every face of her leered in a furrow of envy, mistrust,  
 Malice, — each eye of her gave me its glitter of grati-  
 fied hate! 720

Gravely they turned to take counsel, to cast for ex-  
 cuses. I stood

Quivering, — the limbs of me fretting as fire frets, an  
 inch from dry wood:

“ Persia has come, Athens asks aid, and still they de-  
 bate?

Thunder, thou Zeus! Athene, are Spartans a quarry  
 beyond

Swing of thy spear? Phoibos and Artemis, clang them  
 ‘ Ye must ’! ” 725

No bolt launched from Olumpos! Lo, their answer at  
 last!

“ Has Persia come, — does Athens ask aid, — may  
 Sparta befriend?

Nowise precipitate judgment — too weighty the issue  
 at stake!

Count we no time lost time which lags through respect to  
 the gods!

Ponder that precept of old, ‘ No warfare, whatever the odds  
 In your favour, so long as the moon, half-orbed, is un-  
 able to take 731

Full-circle her state in the sky!’ Already she rounds  
 to it fast:

Athens must wait, patient as we — who judgment sus-  
 pend.”

Athens, — except for that sparkle, — thy name, I had  
mouldered to ash !

That sent a blaze through my blood ; off, off and away  
was I back, 735

— Not one word to waste, one look to lose on the false  
and the vile !

Yet “ O gods of my land ! ” I cried, as each hillock  
and plain,

Wood and stream, I knew, I named, rushing past them  
again,

“ Have ye kept faith, proved mindful of honours we  
paid you erewhile ?

Vain was the filleted victim, the fulsome libation ! Too  
rash 740

Love in its choice, paid you so largely service so slack !

“ Oak and olive and bay, — I bid you cease to enwreathe  
Brows made bold by your leaf ! Fade at the Persian’s  
foot,

You that, our patrons were pledged, should never adorn  
a slave !

Rather I hail thee, Parnes, — trust to thy wild waste  
tract ! 745

Treeless, herbless, lifeless mountain ! What matter if  
slacked

My speed may hardly be, for homage to crag and to cave  
No deity deigns to drape with verdure ? — at least I can  
breathe,

Fear in thee no fraud from the blind, no lie from the  
mute ! ”

Such my cry as, rapid, I ran over Parnes' ridge ; 750  
Gully and gap I clambered and cleared till, sudden, a  
bar

Jutted, a stoppage of stone against me, blocking the  
way.

Right ! for I minded the hollow to traverse, the fissure  
across :

" Where I could enter, there I depart by ! Night in the  
fosse ?

Athens to aid ? Though the dive were through Erebos,  
thus I obey — 755

Out of the day dive, into the day as bravely arise ! No  
bridge

Better ! " — when — ha ! what was it I came on, of  
wonders that are ?

There, in the cool of a cleft, sat he — majestic  
Pan !

Ivy drooped wanton, kissed his head, moss cushioned  
his hoof ;

All the great god was good in the eyes grave-kindly —  
the curl 760

Carved on the bearded cheek, amused at a mortal's awe  
As, under the human trunk, the goat-thighs grand I  
saw.

" Halt, Pheidippides ! " — halt I did, my brain of a  
whirl :

" Hither to me ! Why pale in my presence ? " he gracious  
began :

" How is it, — Athens, only in Hellas, holds me aloof ?



“ Athens, she only, rears me no fane, makes me no  
feast ! 766

Wherefore? Than I what godship to Athens more  
helpful of old?

Ay, and still, and for ever her friend! Test Pan, trust me!  
Go, bid Athens take heart, laugh Persia to scorn, have  
faith

In the temples and tombs! Go, say to Athens, ‘ The  
Goat-God saith : 770

When Persia — so much as strews not the soil — is cast  
in the sea, .

Then praise Pan who fought in the ranks with your most  
and least,

Goat-thigh to greaved-thigh, made one cause with the  
free and the bold!’

“ Say Pan saith : ‘ Let this, foreshowing the place, be  
the pledge!’ ”

(Gay, the liberal hand held out this herbage I bear 775  
— Fennel — I grasped it a-tremble with dew — what-  
ever it bode)

“ While, as for thee ” . . . But enough! He was gone.  
If I ran hitherto —

Be sure that, the rest of my journey, I ran no longer, but  
flew.

Parnes to Athens — earth no more, the air was my road :  
Here am I back. Praise Pan, we stand no more on the  
razor’s edge ! 780

Pan for Athens, Pan for me ! I too have a guerdon rare !

---

Then spoke Miltiades. "And thee, best runner of Greece,  
Whose limbs did duty indeed, — what gift is promised  
thyself?

Tell it us straightway, — Athens the mother demands  
of her son!"

Rosily blushed the youth: he paused: but, lifting at  
length 785

His eyes from the ground, it seemed as he gathered the  
rest of his strength

Into the utterance — "Pan spoke thus: 'For what thou  
hast done

Count on a worthy reward! Henceforth be allowed  
thee release

From the racer's toil, no vulgar reward in praise or in pelf!"

"I am bold to believe, Pan means reward the most to  
my mind! 790

Fight I shall, with our foremost, wherever this fennel  
may grow, —

Pound — Pan helping us — Persia to dust, and, under  
the deep,

Whelm her away for ever; and then, — no Athens to  
save, —

Marry a certain maid, I know keeps faith to the brave, —  
Hie to my house and home: and, when my children  
shall creep 795

Close to my knees, — recount how the God was awful  
yet kind,

Promised their sire reward to the full — rewarding him  
— so!"

---

Unforeseeing one! Yes, he fought on the Marathon  
day:

So, when Persia was dust, all cried "To Akropolis!  
Run, Pheidippides, one race more! the meed is thy due!  
'Athens is saved, thank Pan,' go shout!" He flung  
down his shield, 801

Ran like fire once more: and the space 'twixt the Fen-  
nel-field

And Athens was stubble again, a field which a fire runs  
through,

Till in he broke: "Rejoice, we conquer!" Like wine  
through clay,

Joy in his blood bursting his heart, he died — the bliss!

So, to this day, when friend meets friend, the word of  
salute 806

Is still "Rejoice!" — his word which brought rejoicing  
indeed.

So is Pheidippides happy for ever, — the noble strong  
man

Who could race like a god, bear the face of a god, whom  
a god loved so well;

He saw the land saved he had helped to save, and was  
suffered to tell 810

Such tidings, yet never decline, but, gloriously as he  
began,

So to end gloriously — once to shout, thereafter be  
mute:

"Athens is saved!" — Pheidippides dies in the shout  
for his meed.

## XII

## MY LAST DUCHESS

'That's my last Duchess painted on the wall,  
Looking as if she were alive. I call 815  
That piece a wonder, now: Frà Pandolf's hands  
Worked busily a day, and there she stands.  
Will't please you sit and look at her? I said  
"Frà Pandolf" by design, for never read  
Strangers like you that pictured countenance, 820  
The depth and passion of its earnest glance,  
But to myself they turned (since none puts by  
The curtain I have drawn for you, but I)  
And seemed as they would ask me, if they durst,  
How such a glance came there; so, not the first 825  
Are you to turn and ask thus. Sir, 'twas not  
Her husband's presence only, called that spot  
Of joy into the Duchess' cheek: perhaps  
Frà Pandolf chanced to say, "Her mantle laps  
Over my lady's wrist too much," or "Paint 830  
Must never hope to reproduce the faint  
Half-flush that dies along her throat:" such stuff  
Was courtesy, she thought, and cause enough  
For calling up that spot of joy. She had  
A heart — how shall I say? — too soon made glad, 835  
Too easily impressed: she liked whate'er  
She looked on, and her looks went everywhere.  
Sir, 'twas all one! My favour at her breast,  
The dropping of the daylight in the West,  
The bough of cherries some officious fool 840



Broke in the orchard for her, the white mule  
She rode with round the terrace — all and each  
Would draw from her alike the approving speech,  
Or blush, at least. She thanked men, — good! but  
thanked

Somehow — I know not how — as if she ranked 845  
My gift of a nine-hundred-years-old name  
With anybody's gift. Who'd stoop to blame  
This sort of trifling? Even had you skill  
In speech — (which I have not) — to make your will  
Quite clear to such an one, and say, "Just this 850  
Or that in you disgusts me; here you miss,  
Or there exceed the mark" — and if she let  
Herself be lessoned so, nor plainly set  
Her wits to yours, forsooth, and made excuse,  
— E'en then would be some stooping; and I choose 855  
Never to stoop. Oh, sir, she smiled, no doubt,  
Whene'er I passed her; but who passed without  
Much the same smile? This grew; I gave commands;  
Then all smiles stopped together. There she stands  
As if alive. Will't please you rise? We'll meet 860  
The company below, then. I repeat,  
The Count your master's known munificence  
Is ample warrant that no just pretence  
Of mine for dowry will be disallowed;  
Though his fair daughter's self, as I avowed 865  
At starting, is my object. Nay, we'll go  
Together down, sir. Notice Neptune, though,  
Taming a sea-horse, thought a rarity,  
Which Claus of Innsbruck cast in bronze for me!



## XIII

## UP AT A VILLA — DOWN IN THE CITY

(As distinguished by an Italian Person of Quality)

Had I but plenty of money, money enough and to  
spare, 870

The house for me, no doubt, were a house in the city-  
square ;

Ah, such a life, such a life, as one leads at the window  
there !

Something to see, by Bacchus, something to hear, at  
least !

There, the whole day long, one's life is a perfect  
feast ;

While up at a villa one lives, I maintain it, no more  
than a beast. 875

Well now, look at our villa ! stuck like the horn of a  
bull

Just on a mountain-edge as bare as the creature's skull,  
Save a mere shag of a bush with hardly a leaf to pull !  
— I scratch my own, sometimes, to see if the hair's  
turned wool.

But the city, oh the city — the square with the houses !  
Why ? 880

They are stone-faced, white as a curd, there's something  
to take the eye !

Houses in four straight lines, not a single front awry ;

You watch who crosses and gossips, who saunters, who  
hurries by ;  
Green blinds, as a matter of course, to draw when the  
sun gets high ;  
And the shops with fanciful signs which are painted  
properly. 885

What of a villa ? . Though winter be over in March by  
rights,  
'Tis May perhaps ere the snow shall have withered well  
off the heights :  
You've the brown ploughed land before, where the oxen  
steam and wheeze,  
And the hills over-smoked behind by the faint grey  
olive trees.

Is it better in May, I ask you? You've summer all at  
once ; 890  
In a day he leaps complete with a few strong April  
suns.  
'Mid the sharp short emerald wheat, scarce risen three  
fingers well,  
The wild tulip, at end of its tube, blows out its great  
red bell  
Like a thin clear bubble of blood, for the children to  
pick and sell.

Is it ever hot in the square? There's a fountain to  
spout and splash ! 895  
In the shade it sings and springs ; in the shine such  
foambows flash

On the horses with curling fish-tails, that prance and  
paddle and pash  
Round the lady atop in her conch — fifty gazers do not  
abash,  
Though all that she wears is some weeds round her  
waist in a sort of sash.

All the year long at the villa, nothing to see though  
you linger, 900  
Except yon cypress that points like death's lean lifted  
forefinger.

Some think fireflies pretty, when they mix i'the corn  
and mingle,  
Or thrid the stinking hemp till the stalks of it seem  
a-tingle.

Late August or early September, the stunning cicala is  
shrill,

And the bees keep their tiresome whine round the  
resinous firs on the hill. 905

Enough of the seasons, — I spare you the months of  
the fever and chill.

Ere you open your eyes in the city, the blessed church-  
bells begin :

No sooner the bells leave off than the diligence rattles in :  
You get the pick of the news, and it costs you never a pin.  
By and by there's the travelling doctor gives pills, lets  
blood, draws teeth ; 910

Or the Pulcinello-trumpet breaks up the market be-  
neath.

At the post-office such a scene-picture — the new play,  
piping hot !

And a notice how, only this morning, three liberal  
thieves were shot.

Above it, behold the Archbishop's most fatherly of  
rebukes,

And beneath, with his crown and his lion, some little  
new law of the Duke's ! 915

Or a sonnet with flowery marge, to the Reverend Don  
So-and-so,

Who is Dante, Boccaccio, Petrarca, Saint Jerome, and  
Cicero,

“ And moreover,” (the Sonnet goes rhyming,) “ the skirts  
of Saint Paul has reached,

Having preached us those six Lent-lectures more  
unctuous than ever he preached.”

Noon strikes, — here sweeps the procession ! our Lady  
borne smiling and smart 920

With a pink gauze gown all spangles, and seven swords  
stuck in her heart !

*Bang-whang-whang* goes the drum, *tootle-te-tootle* the  
fife ;

No keeping one's haunches still : it's the greatest pleas-  
ure in life.

But bless you, it's dear — it's dear ! fowls, wine, at  
double the rate.

They have clapped a new tax upon salt, and what oil  
pays passing the gate 925

It's a horror to think of. And so, the villa for me, not  
the city!

Beggars can scarcely be choosers: but still — ah, the  
pity, the pity!

Look, two and two go the priests, then the monks with  
cowls and sandals,

And the penitents dressed in white shirts, a-holding the  
yellow candles;

One, he carries a flag up straight, and another a cross  
with handles, 930

And the Duke's guard brings up the rear, for the  
better prevention of scandals:

*Bang-whang-whang* goes the drum, *tootle-te-tootle* the  
fife.

Oh, a day in the city-square, there is no such pleasure  
in life!



# NOTES

## LORD BYRON

41. On one of these columns Byron's name is carved. [See Naef's *Guide* quoted by Mr. E. H. Coleridge.]

42. The large, white-walled Château de Chillon stands on the shores of the Lake of Geneva, between the Alps and the entrances of the Rhone. [See Naef.]

415. Napoleon's retreat from Moscow, 1812.

512. Pricking on. Cf. Spenser's *Faerie Queene*, Canto I, l. 1. This may be one of the many reminiscences of older poetry with which Byron's remarkable memory was stored.

---

## WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

209. "There are [those] who ask not."

257. Two Voices. The voice of the sea is that of England, the voice of the mountain is of Switzerland, which was usurped, in 1800, by the French, under Napoleon.

XI. Venice was taken by the French in 1797.

351. Cf. Milton's *Lycidas*, l. 37.

628. The family name of the Marquis of Queensberry is Douglas.

757. Cf. previous lines 99, 100.

XXIX. This poem contains many quotations from a beautiful ballad by Hamilton of Bangour (1704-1754) called *The Braes of Yarrow*. Certain of the passages reproduced will be found in the stanzas below.

" Sweet smells the birk, green grows, green grows the grass,  
 Yellow on Yarrow's bank the gowan,  
 Fair hangs the apple frae the rock,  
 Sweet the wave of Yarrow flowin'.

" Flows Yarrow sweet ? as sweet, as sweet flows Tweed,  
 As green its grass, its gowan as yellow,  
 As sweet smells on its braes the birk,  
 The apple frae the rock as mellow.

" Fair was thy love, fair, fair indeed thy love ;  
 In flowery bands thou him didst fetter ;  
 Though he was fair and weil beloved again,  
 Than me he never lo'ed thee better.

" Busk ye, then busk, my bonny, bonny bride ;  
 Busk ye, busk ye, my winsome marrow ;  
 Busk ye, and lo'e me on the banks of Tweed,  
 And think nae mair on the Braes of Yarrow."

XXXVI. "Written soon after the death, by shipwreck, of Wordsworth's brother John." [Palgrave.]

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### PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY

310. Interlunar swoon is explained by Palgrave as the "interval of the moon's invisibility."

531. "Arcturus never sets; hence the ever blooming daisies are called Arcturi." [Alexander.]

772. The Maenads were the frenzied followers of Dionysus.

822. Mr. Palgrave has given an appropriate title to lines taken from Shelley's drama, *Prometheus Unbound*.

840. Stain. In the opinion of several editors, Shelley here meant "strain."

859. "Thoughts" depends upon "on" in the following line.

## JOHN KEATS

51. Keats has confused Cortez and Balboa.

III. Palgrave has supplied a title "that the aim of the piece following may be grasped more clearly."

V. "This beautiful sonnet was the last word of a youth in whom, if the fulfilment may ever safely be prophesied from the promise, England lost one of the most rarely gifted in the long roll of her poets." [Palgrave.]

158. Shakespeare, Ben Jonson, and other "poets dead and gone" had frequented the Mermaid.

## ROBERT BROWNING

I. These songs have to do with the uprising for King Charles I against Parliament, in 1640.

IV. This poem has no historical basis.

IX. *One Word More* was originally the final poem in the collection called *Men and Women*.

602. Grève. Sands left by the outgoing tide, near St. Malo.

686-689. This refers to statues and other memorials in the Louvre.

702. Archons. Magistrates. — Tettix. A golden cicada worn as an emblem.

704. The myrtle wreath was the badge of the messenger.

776. Fennel. "*Fennel field*, in Greek *Marathon*; and Pan meant when he gave Pheidippides the bunch of fennel to signify the place where the victory would be won." [Miss Porter and Miss Clarke.]



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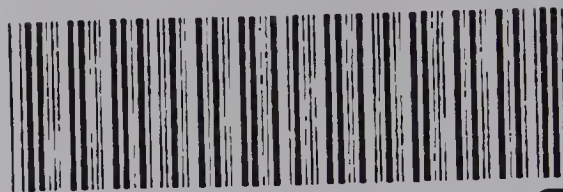








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